Hafa Adai!

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THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

COASTAL PLAYGROUND

A group of men paddles a canoe in the Saipan Lagoon, the island's favorite coastal playground, on Saturday morning. They paddled past hundreds of children and adults participating in the American Red Cross-NMI Chapter's signature annual walkathon. HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

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273 DAYS

BEFORE THE CW PROGRAM EXPIRES ON DEC. 31, 2014

OPINION METER

This week's poll:

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INSIDE

ASIA

North and South Korea fire artillery shells into each other's waters.

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WORLD

Russia pulls a battalion of troops away from the Ukrainian border.

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LIFE & STYLE

Johnny Depp showed off an engagement ring that he calls a "chick's ring."

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GAO: Wage hikes offset by price spikes

» CW, loss of tourists greater concerns than wage adjustments
» 189 govt employees covered by 2014 minimum wage hike to cost some $220K

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

A 114-page U.S. Government Accountability Office report released yesterday showed that increases in CNMI employees' earnings as a result of minimum wage hikes have been largely negated by consumer price increases, including fuel. The CNMI's current minimum wage of $5.55 an hour will increase by another 50 cents to $6.05 an hour on Sept. 30 this year.

Demapan

Employees' average earnings increased by 3 percent from 2011 to 2012, but prices increased by 2 percent.

This means the inflation-adjusted average earnings of those employed increased only by 1 percent, says the GAO report.

GAO is the U.S. Congress' investigative arm.

From 2006 to 2012, average inflation-adjusted earnings fell by about 2 percent. This was a result of about 29-percent increase in average earnings that was offset by an about 31-percent increase in prices in the same period.

But minimum wage was not as important a concern as the potential loss of foreign workers after Dec. 31, 2014, when the transitional CW program expires, and a halt to Russian and Chinese tourists' parole into the CNMI, the GAO report says.

Meanwhile, the Inos administration said yesterday that Gov. Eloy S. Inos' proposed fiscal year 2015 budget takes into consideration this year's scheduled Sept. 30 minimum wage increase of 50 cents an hour.

"The impact on this budget proposal for the salary adjustments to a total of

See WAGE on Page 4

Clock begins for Saipan casino investors

» Inos signs bill amending casino law

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Gov. Eloy S. Inos signed yesterday a bill amending the original law that legalized casino gaming on Saipan, setting off the clock for interested investors to apply for an exclusive casino license on Saipan for a nonrefundable application fee of $1 million and subsequent deposit of $30 million in license fee "by May 5, 2014."

Inos

Inos and Lt. Gov. Jude U. Hofschneider issued a request for proposals yesterday for a casino resort developer license for 40 years.

The qualified investor needs to invest a minimum and initial $2 billion, inclusive of the casino and hotel-resort with at least 2,000 guest rooms.

Qualified applications will be evaluated on three broad factors: financial structure, 40 percent; proposed business plan, 40 percent; and benefit to community, 20 percent.

The governor signed House floor leader Ralph Demapan's (Cov-Saipan) House Bill 18-182, House Draft 6 into Public Law 18-43 yesterday afternoon, a day after the Legislature transmitted it to the governor the bill.

PL 18-43 amends PL 18-38, the original bill legalizing casino gaming on Saipan.

The new law contains 12 sets of issues that address the problematic parts of the original Saipan casino law, including provisions on tax rebate, timelines, and where the casino-related money would be used.

"With the adoption of this bill, the shortcomings of Public Law 18-38 are addressed and we have established a more balanced gaming program for addressing the many financial issues facing the Commonwealth," Inos told House Speaker Joseph Deleon Guerrero (Ind-Saipan) and Senate President Ralph Torres (R-Saipan) in his April 1 transmittal.

The governor thanked the speaker, the president and members of both houses for their cooperation in quickly adopting both HBs 18-182 and 18-179.

"This joint effort between the Legislative and Executive branches of government in the establishment of this important public policy is to be commended," Inos said.

'Mixed feelings'

The governor said he realizes that there are mixed feelings on the establishment of gaming in the CNMI.

"…but in light of current financial constraints; the need to address retiree obligations; and provide for expansion of our economy, I sincerely feel that this is the best alternative," he said.

At a Republican Party kickoff rally on March 23, the governor assured that retirees will be able to receive, within 90 days, their 25 percent pension that was cut last year.

It was the first time that the Senate passed a Saipan casino bill from the

See CLOCK on Page 4

Cape Air resumes normal service

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

After a weeklong suspension, Cape Air's operations in the CNMI have resumed and all regular flights to and from Guam, Saipan, and Rota are back on schedule, according to Guam United Airlines spokeswoman Regine B. Lee.

"Cape Air is back in service and has resumed their normal flight schedule in the CNMI since March 30," Lee said in a statement.

All Cape Air flights from Guam to the CNMI were cancelled from March 21 to March 29, due to technical issues. One of the airline's planes, prior to this announcement, reportedly made an emergency landing at the Francisco C. Ada-Saipan International Airport on the noon of March 21 that resulted in the cancellation of flights.

Lee told *Saipan Tribune* that with the resumption of Cape Air's schedule, the same aircraft is being used to transport passengers to and from Guam.

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Inos set to deliver State of the Commonwealth. PAGE 3

NFL names National Team to represent NMI in Kansas. PAGE 7

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For inquiries please contact Celia Pillarina at 235-2440 ext. 171

Local

King asks court to exclude testimony of 5 FBI agents

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Defense attorney Janet H. King has asked the Superior Court to bar Federal Bureau of Investigations special agents and FBI Lab analysts from testifying at next week's jury trial of Joseph A. Crisostomo if the Office of the Attorney General fails to produce some materials in the personnel files of the witnesses.

The 40-year-old Crisostomo is facing charges of first-degree murder, kidnapping, and other charges for the killing of bartender Emerita Romero in February 2012. Crisostomo's trial will start on Monday, April 7.

In a motion to preclude, King said the OAG has refused to disclose Henthorn materials of any personnel of the FBI.

Henthorn gives defense attorneys the right to any information in an agent's personnel record relating to dishonesty, perjury, and others that can be used to impeach the agent's testimony.

King said the government has acknowledged that the defense has made specific Henthorn inquiries regarding the personnel files of its investigative law enforcement agents, including FBI agents.

King said the government's response has been that, since the FBI won't permit disclosure, the Commonwealth is not in a position to disclose such materials.

The lawyer said that five FBI agents took lead roles in the investigation of the case and all actively participated in the investigation since Romero was first reported missing.

King said she made numerous requests of the previous chief prosecutor, Shelli Neal, for the production of all exculpatory material contained in the personnel files of any law enforcement officers who would be testifying at the trial. She said Neal assured her that such material would be forthcoming after the filing of a final witness list.

"To date, no such material has been produced and now it is evident that, regarding agents of the FBI, no such review will be made at any time," King said.

The lawyer said in the *U.S. vs. Henthorn case*, the Ninth Circuit of Appeals held that, upon a defendant's request for production, the government has the duty to examine the personnel files of its agents for any possible impeachment material, and to disclose any such materials to the defendant.

King said the trial court has inherent supervisory powers and the appropriate remedy is to exclude the FBI agents from testifying.

COMMUNITY SERVICE CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Cadets of the Saipan Southern High School Manta Ray Battalion help out in the American Red Cross Walkathon on Saturday, March 29, 2014. They helped out with traffic control and parking from 5:30am to 9am.

Flame Tree Arts Festival set for April 25-27

The Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture is getting ready for the upcoming Annual Flame Tree Arts Festival.

The event, scheduled for April 25 to 27 at the Civic Center Park in Susupe, marks the 33rd anniversary of the CNMI's biggest annual festival.

The Flame Tree Arts Festival celebrates the rich art and cultural heritage of the Commonwealth and takes place usually in late April during the blossoming of flame tree flowers after which the event was named. The annual festival features a wide selection of artwork from CNMI, Guam, Rota and visiting artists.

The event also showcases presentations by local and guest performing groups and musicians, art demonstrations, and an array of festival food favorites.

"This year's festival marks its 33rd year celebration of one of the biggest cultural events here in the CNMI that promotes, perpetuates, and preserves the knowledge and skills of our gifted artist by providing programs such as this yearly [event] to demonstrate and display their beautiful arts and crafts for all to experience," said festival coordinator Parker Y. Yobei.

According to the Yobei, a group from Southern California, a jazz group from Michigan (with one member on the island already), and two different groups from Guam will be joining the festival this year.

"There are still 20 slots available, but all 12 slots for food vendors are closed," Yobei said.

Registration is still open to artists that want to take part this year. The fee schedule is as follows: Arts Council registered artists, $60; new or non-registered artists, $200; private commercial or food vendors, $1,000; non-profit organizations, $700; and information booths, $250.

"Artists are welcome to come in and register for the space. We will be open for another week for the chance to get a space before closing," Yobei said.

The Arts Council would like to also thank major sponsors Delta Air Lines and IT&E who will be supporting the festival this year.

To register or for more information, visit the Arts Council office next to the post office on Capitol Hill or call 322-9982 or 83 to get applications via email. ***(Jayson Camacho)***

Inos set to deliver SOCA

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Gov. Eloy S. Inos has accepted the Senate and the House of Representatives' invitation to deliver a State of the Commonwealth Address pursuant. This will be Inos' first SOCA since he became governor on Feb. 20, 2013.

House Speaker Joseph Deleon Guerrero (Ind-Saipan) and Senate President Ralph Torres (R-Saipan) invited Inos to appear before a joint session of the Legislature to present a SOCA referred to in Article III, Section 9 (b) of the NMI Constitution.

» House, Senate also ask delegate to deliver report

Press secretary Angel Demapan, when sought for comment yesterday, said the governor "will accept the invitation to deliver a State of the Commonwealth Address."

"The administration will work with the speaker and the president to identify a date for this event," Demapan told *Saipan Tribune.*

The Legislature also invited Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) to participate in the SOCA and "report on the accomplishments of your office and your goals and objectives."

The last time a CNMI governor delivered a SOCA was on Jan. 8, 2013. At the time, some House members walked out of the joint legislative session when then governor Benigno R. Fitial delivered his SOCA. Over a month later, Fitial stepped down after he was impeached by the House and before the Senate could hold an impeachment trial.

As of yesterday, there's no firm date yet when the joint session of the Legislature would be to receive Inos and Sablan's addresses, months ahead of a general election in November.

This also comes at a time when the CNMI is seeing increases in its tourist arrivals, expansion of existing hotels, construction of new ones and the establishment of a casino on Saipan as a result of a new law legalizing casino gaming on the island. For years, casino gaming was legal only on Tinian and Rota.

Kim's court battle continues

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Businesswoman Jung Ja Kim's court battles continue, this time in local court against her former husband.

Fresh off a win in her racketeering lawsuit in federal court against her former lawyer, attorney Ramon K. Quichocho, his law firm, and his wife, Kim now turns to the CNMI Superior Court where she and her ex-husband, Byoong Seob Choi, are wrangling over marital properties and debts.

In fact, while jurors were still deliberating in federal court last week in Kim's racketeering lawsuit, Kim was on the witness stand before Superior Court Presiding Judge Robert C. Naraja. On Monday, it was Kim's former husband who testified in Superior Court. The hearing continued yesterday afternoon.

While Kim's lawsuit was complicated in federal court, the lawsuit in Superior Court is simple: Distribution of marital properties and debts.

Attorney Robert T. Torres, counsel for Kim, told *Saipan Tribune* that the main issue in the Superior Court case is whether So-In Corp. and Pacific Saipan LLC are marital properties.

Torres said they filed a motion in September 2008 to determine that the two companies are not marital properties.

"It took so long...and we're now here at the point of actual hearing," Torres said.

Attorney Timothy H. Bellas is counsel for Choi.

Choi filed a petition for dissolution of his marriage with Kim in May 2008. The divorce is over.

The ongoing hearing in Superior Court is a continuation of the divorce proceedings because when Kim and Choi got divorced, they never split their marital properties.

Kim is claiming that the properties are all hers; Choi says it should be a 50-50 split.

Hearings in the case were held for a week in September 2013, but was then reset several times for various reasons, including the trial in federal court of Kim's lawsuit.

According to Kim's lawsuit in federal court, on May 14, 2008, upon Quichocho's misrepresentation, Kim caused eight poker machines to be transferred to Tan Dingo LLC for the below market price of $7,600 from Pacific Saipan LLC, an entity owned by her daughter from Choi.

On July 10, 2008, Kim, as president of So-In Corp., transferred an additional eight poker machines to Tan Dingo.

On Oct. 7, 2008, Kim transferred 10 more poker machines to Tan Dingo. Those machines were located on Rota and previously owned by Pacific Saipan LLC.

On Nov. 10, 2008, Kim caused So-In Corp. to transfer nine more poker machines to Latte Stone LLC.

On Friday, a federal court jury rendered a verdict holding Ramon Quichocho, his wife Frances, his law firm, and their company Karissa LLC liable to pay $2.4 million in damages to Kim, who sued them for racketeering and other claims.

Commerce employee found guilty of assaulting common-law wife

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A compliance officer of the Department of Commerce has been found guilty of assaulting his common-law wife in front of their minor daughter at their home in Kagman last year.

In a written judgment yesterday, Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman found Erwin Paul Togawa guilty of assault and disturbing the peace.

Wiseman said the evidence in the case presented proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt in the assault and disturbing the peace charges.

The judge, however, acquitted the 41-year-old Togawa on a charge of disturbing the peace involving the child, after finding no proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

Sentencing will be on April 23, 2014 at 1:30pm.

The bench trial was held on Monday.

» OAG dismisses felony charge because knife missing at DPS

It was supposed to be a jury trial, but a felony charge of assault with a dangerous weapon was later removed from the case. Assistant attorney general Margo Brown-Badawy dropped the charge as the Department of Public Safety could not locate the knife that was allegedly involved in the case.

Police detective Melissa Baulelong had stated in her report that, according to the victim, Togawa pulled out a knife from his waist pouch, pointed it at her, and threatened to kill her on Jan. 29, 2013.

The victim also told police that during an argument with Togawa on May 10, 2012, she took her daughter and walked out of the house. Togawa allegedly followed them on a car and threatened to run them over if they don't get inside the car. The victim said she later heard the car drive behind her, nearly hitting them.

When police officers arrested Togawa at the Department of Commerce, they reportedly recovered from him a knife.

Attorney Mark Hanson served as court-appointed counsel for Togawa.

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Lotte, DFS argue over judge's comments in dismissal of case

GUAM (Pacific News Center)—Guam Supreme Court justices will decide whether or not Superior Court Judge Michael Bordallo blundered in making comments on a case after he had already ruled he had no jurisdiction to preside over the DFS-Lotte-Airport case.

Bordallo had dismissed a temporary restraining order last July that DFS had filed against the airport and Lotte, after Lotte won the bid for the airport concession contract.

The appeal stems from a temporary restraining order DFS sought against the Guam International Airport Authority and Lotte Duty Free. DFS sought the TRO after they lost the bid for the lucrative airport concession contract to Lotte. DFS fought the airport's decision, accusing them of being in collusion with Lotte.

The temporary restraining order would have prevented Lotte from moving into the airport retail space that DFS had occupied for years. Bordallo dismissed the case, noting the court doesn't have jurisdiction to preside over it, but then he proceeded to make comments about the case that were unfavorable to Lotte.

"Lotte takes issue with certain language that's contained in the TRO orders that were rendered by Judge Michael Bordallo dated July 17 and Oct. 10 of last year," stated Lotte counsel Cesar Cabot.

Essentially, Bordallo agreed that there may be some merit to the arguments.

"We are only asking that the extraneous and improper statements that were made by the court be stricken from the record," added Cabot. "It was false, and it was clear error and an abuse of discretion by the Superior Court."

But DFS lawyer Maurice Suh disagrees. In fact, he points out that Lotte doesn't have the right to appeal this decision, especially since they are the winning party.

"A winning party cannot appeal from victory. There's been a lot of talk from the appellants about the harm of the victim, the issues surrounding the victim, but frankly the rule is clear, you don't have a right to appeal," Suh said.

The issue surrounds some discussion that took place in court proceedings before Bordallo. Although the judge dismissed the TRO, the parties did present arguments in court on why the TRO should or should not be granted and the timeliness of the protests filed.

Chief Justice Philip Carbullido took the matter under advisement, but also noted during the hearing that his concern is not whether Bordallo erred in making statements after the fact, but whether or not he had the authority to make them.

SILC members obtain leadership, advocacy training

Officers and members of the CNMI Statewide Independent Living Council benefited from training coordinated by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and facilitated by local consultants and partner agencies.

Felicitas "Tee" P. Abraham, former OVR director, facilitated the SILC orientation and training on March 18-19, with topics ranging from history of disability and independent living movement, function of the SILC and roles of members, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, State Plan for Independent Living, disability resources in the CNMI, and local SILC partners, among other equally important topics.

The March 20 morning session focused on leadership concepts and problem solving facilitated by Dr. Carmen Fernandez, former member of the State Rehabilitation Council during her tenure as Northern Marianas College president. Participants engaged in lively discussions and presented on some of the current issues facing people with disabilities such as accessibility and the need to establish additional centers of independent living on Rota and Tinian.

That same day's afternoon session was facilitated by community partners, the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc., and Council on Developmental Disabilities. NMPASI projects specialists Greg Borja and Tom Thornburgh (also SILC member) presented on the history of protection and advocacy and Robert's Rules of Order (aka parliamentary procedures), respectively. Additionally, Pamela Sablan, CDD executive director and SRC vice chairperson, facilitated the self-advocacy training, with tips on what participants can do to become effective advocates for themselves and others. This segment of the training helped participants to understand their individual strengths and needs, their goals in life, knowing both their rights and responsibilities, and communicating these to those in a position that can help them make a positive difference in their life and communities.

For the first time, SRC officers were given the opportunity to join their SILC colleagues in the orientation and training. SRC vice chair Sablan said that collaboration among partners to provide services to mutual consumers is essential to program success. That given, "SRC and SILC working together in partnership with OVR to assist individuals with disabilities who want to work be gainfully employed in the CNMI [is a federal mandate we will embrace]."

It is the mission of SILC to serve individuals with significant disabilities in the CNMI and to promote their independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion into society. The Council supports the independent living philosophy of consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and advocacy.

The CNMI SILC is composed of nine members: Consolacion Atalig (chair), Gernadine Camacho (vice chair), Emeterio Fitial (secretary), Lydia Igitol (fiscal officer), Estella Cabaobas (sergeant-at-arms), Belta Pangelinan (Tinian), Tom Thornburgh, Avery Hocog (Rota), and Arlene Yamagata, M.S., C.R.C. (ex-officio representing OVR). ***(OVR)***

BECQ brigade to join islandwide cleanup on April 25

In celebration of the 31st Environmental Awareness Month, the regularly scheduled Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality Cleanup Brigade will coincide with this year's BECQ EAM Islandwide Cleanup scheduled for Friday, April 25, 2014, from 2pm to 4:30pm. For more information on how to participate in this event, contact EAM Islandqide Cleanup event coordinator Ben Somol at 664-8500.

Last month's Tank Beach Cleanup was successful with 27 volunteers participating. Thanks to students from Saipan Southern High School YEA Club, Northern Marianas College, Commonwealth Utilities Corp., and other volunteers, about 360 lbs of marine debris was removed from the beach and properly disposed of. During last year's Islandwide Cleanup, over 4,400 lbs of trash were picked up from roadsides and beaches and properly disposed.

The BECQ is looking forward to a repeat success this year, so join BECQ's Islandwide Cleanup and "Pick It Up!" Let us work together for the health of our coral reefs and cleanliness of our islands for everyone to enjoy.

For more information about volunteering, contact the BECQ office at 664-8500/1. ***(BECQ)***

CAPE

From Page 1

"Yes. United has confirmed that the same aircraft is being used," Lee said, referring to the ATR-42 that recently went through a maintenance check.

Customers expressed relief after learning of the resumption of Cape Air's normal operation, saying it is the only flight right now that provides the CNMI regular flights to Guam.

Cape Air's competitor, Freedom Air, has temporarily stopped servicing the islands. The airline, which is undergoing bankruptcy reorganization in Guam, lost its insurance coverage last March 8.

One Cape Air customer who is booked for today's flight to Saipan said that having a reliable air service prevents some customers from paying a higher airfare.

During the weeklong suspension of Cape Air's operation in the CNMI, United Airlines provided an extra flight to affected customers, using a Boeing 737-800 aircraft.

It was the middle of last year when Cape Air resumed daily fights to Rota from a four-times-a-week schedule.

CLOCK

From Page 1

House in at least four years.

Previously, casino gaming is legal only on Tinian and Rota. Saipan voters also twice rejected casino gaming on Saipan; the last vote was in 2007.

But the governor emphasized the need to take adequate steps to regulate the activity.

He said in the coming weeks, they will be thoroughly reviewing proposals for gaming licenses "to ensure that we select licensees who will comply with the high standards of gaming that we are hoping to establish to expand our tourism market."

"I realize that the people of the Commonwealth are relying on our agencies to protect their interest in this expansion of gaming and we will do our best to lay the foundation for proper oversight and control," Inos added.

The governor earlier said he expects investors from Hong Kong and Korea to participate in the application process. These include Mega Stars Overseas Ltd., the new owner of Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino.

Tinian Mayor Ramon Dela Cruz is worried that Mega Stars will hold off plans to expand its investments on Tinian once it applies for a license to operate a casino on Saipan.

WAGE

From Page 1

189 employees is estimated at $220,000," press secretary Angel Demapan told *Saipan Tribune*.

As of 7 last night, the Legislature had yet to receive the governor's proposed 2015 budget. But the governor had until 11:59pm last night to do so.

GAO's report, "American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Economic indicators since minimum wage increases began," cites the impact of minimum wage increases since 2007.

The 2007 U.S. law requires the CNMI and American Samoa to increase their minimum wage by 50 cents every year until it reaches the federal wage floor of $7.25 an hour.

But subsequent laws allowed the CNMI to skip a 50-cent hike in 2011, 2013, and 2015 amid concerns about their impact on the economy. The CNMI will reach the current U.S. minimum wage on Sept. 30, 2018.

Since the sizeable garment industry left the CNMI, the territory has relied on its lone industry, tourism.

Greater concerns

The GAO report says the minimum wage "was not as important a concern for discussion group participants as the potential loss of the foreign labor force."

"For hotel representatives we spoke with, providing easier access for Russian and Chinese tourists by having the Department of Homeland Security continue to parole these individuals into the CNMI was a greater concern than the minimum wage," the GAO report says.

Workers on both Saipan and Tinian "feared that prices would increase along with the minimum wage, as they said had occurred at the time of previous increases."

Commerce Secretary Sixto Igisomar, in a comment letter to GAO's David Gootnick, said key challenges faced by CNMI businesses range from "uncertainties surrounding the availability of qualified workers or a labor force, pending a decision from U.S. Department of Labor on contract workers (CWs) program extension."

He said the CNMI governor continues to urge U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas Perez to extend the CW program.

Igisomar also said businesses are predisposed to a high cost of transacting business in an isolated economy that is dependent on imported goods to operate the lone tourism service industry, among others.

He said the cost of fuel locally and globally affects local utility and transportation costs, as well as the opportunity for airlines to service the CNMI tourism industry.

"Although the CNMI does not have a specific disposable income ratio, the average income should negotiate the cost of basic necessities, which it does not. Our residents must cope with the additional burden of high utility and health care costs," the Commerce secretary said.

This year, the CNMI government and its employees must cover a more than 30-percent increase in the government employee health insurance plan premiums, while government retirees saw a 25-percent pension cut.

"This hurdle for government employees is dwarfed by the complete lack of health insurance coverage in the private market for new insured lives in the year 2014—due to implications of the Affordable Care Act," Igisomar told GAO's Gootnick.

Economy, population

GAO says the CNMI's gross domestic product decreased by approximately 36 percent from 2006 to 2012. It has remained relatively flat since 2009.

Population declined from 69,221 in 2000 to 53,883 in 2010.

The total number of people employed fell by some 6 percent or from 25,229 in 2011 to 23,720 in 2012, based on CNMI government tax data.

From 2006 to 2012, the number of people employed went down by 45 percent or from 43,036 to 23,720. Decreases prior to 2009 reflect the closures of garment factories, which employed thousands of foreign workers.

CNMI hotel occupancy and room rates have increased in recent years, but industry representatives that GAO spoke with characterized the recent growth as "an opportunity to recover and reinvest in their properties."

Hotel industry

From June 2011 to June 2013, the median wage among workers employed by CNMI hotel industry questionnaire respondents increased by 10 percent—from $5.33 to $5.86 an hour, the GAO report says.

Future minimum wage increases would affect the wages of 94 percent of current workers in the CNMI hotel industry by the time the minimum wage reaches $7.25 in 2018.

GAO says that based on the wages workers currently earn, minimum wage increases would increase the average annual cost per worker in 2018 by $3,051 since June 2013.

In 2018, payroll will be representing 31 percent of hotels' total operating costs compared to some 26 percent in 2012.

Hotels representing the majority of all workers employed by respondents to GAO's questionnaire attributed past cost-saving strategies and price increases to minimum wage increases.

The GAO report says hotels also attributed their actions to other increased costs and changes to U.S. immigration law, which reduced the number of available permits for foreign workers in the CNMI.

Dad of tourist who drowned to file wrongful death suit

The father of a female Chinese tourist who drowned in the waters off Mañagaha in 2012 has retained a Saipan lawyer to file a wrongful death lawsuit.

Wang Xiao Ting, 65, hired William M. Fitzgerald to prosecute his lawsuit against any person found to be responsible for the death of his daughter, Wang Dao.

Fitzgerald filed on Friday in the U.S. District Court for the NMI a petition, asking the court to appoint Wang Xiao Ting as personal representative of Wang Dao.

Fitzgerald said that Wang Dao, 33, passed away on April 16, 2012, on Mañagaha.

Wang Dao's next of kin are her father, Wang Xiao Ting, and her mother, Shen Li Hua, both residing in China.

Fitzgerald said the father is the proper and appropriate person to bring a civil action arising out of his daughter's death.

Fitzgerald did not disclose who they are planning to sue.

According to a police report, Wang Dao and her group went to Mañagaha on April 16, 2012. Witnesses told police that Dao was seen lying down in the water as the group members were exiting the water to head back to shore.

Witnesses called for help as they applied CPR on Dao. A boat then brought the victim to Smiling Cove Marina. Two lifeguards administered CPR on the victim on their way to the dock.

Medics brought the victim to the Commonwealth Health Center, where a doctor pronounced her dead at 2:56pm that day, police said. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Registration still ongoing for 2014 Liberation Day

With the merging of the CNMI Liberation Day and the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Saipan and Tinian, organizing committee chair Vicente Camacho said they are still accepting registration at the Veterans Affairs Office on Capital Hill for the various activities being planned to mark both occasions.

He said Liberation Day registration for parade floats, Liberation Day Queen candidates, entertainers, and concessions are still ongoing and that there is yet no deadline to close up the June event.

"We are still open and receiving registration. Anybody is welcome to join," Camacho said.

For the parades, Camacho is asking for the participation of community groups, private agencies, and organizations.

According to Camacho, there are already several candidates lined up for this year's Liberation Day Queen.

"We are still accepting those interested for Liberation Day Queen candidates and for anyone who wants to be a part of the event," he said.

Those who want to operate concession stands are also welcome to register. The fee is $600 for non-consumables, $700 for consumables, and $500 for non-profit organizations.

Entertainers are also welcome to be a part of the celebration.

"All the community is requested to help provide the entertainment—those who want to do talent shows, performances, and any form of entertainment," Camacho said.

Saipan traditionally holds Liberation Day on the Fourth of July, coinciding with the U.S. Independence Day.

The two-week-long celebration kicks off on June 6 and culminates in a parade on June 15.

The 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Saipan and Tinian will pay tribute to the veterans, both Japanese and Americans, as well as World War II survivors in a special ceremony to be held at the American Memorial Park on June 15. Tinian will hold its ceremony on June 12.

For those interested to participate in the search for Liberation Queen, or join in the Best Float contest in the parade, entertainment, or as vendors at the festival grounds, contact the Office of the Mayor at 234-6208 and ask for Joann Aquino.

Tour companies and World War II aficionados may contact 70th Anniversary committee chair Camacho at vicente.camacho@gov.mp.

For more information on the events, call the Marianas Visitors Authority at 664-3200. ***(Jayson Camacho)***

Glushko's Academy ballet concert set this weekend

Glushko's Academy, together with the Performing Arts Society, will be hosting the "International Ballet of the Stars 2014" this Saturday and Sunday, April 5 and 6, at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center.

Speaking at yesterday's weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Saipan at the Hyatt Regency Saipan, Anna Glushko, creative director and choreographer of Glushko's Academy, said the concert will be held at the Susupe venue from 6:30pm to 9pm on both days.

Tickets will cost $15 for adults and $10 for children ages 3 to 12 years old.

The ballet concert is titled "Pacquita & Concert," based on *Pacquita*, a ballet in two acts staged first on Russia in 1847 for the Imperial Ballet of St. Petersburg.

This weekend's performance will feature Olga Malinovskaya, who studied at the Moscow Bolshoi Ballet Academy for eight years and is currently a member of Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet as a member of the Corps de Ballet. She will be joined by Artjom Maksakov, who previously danced with the Het National Ballet and Boston Ballet before joining Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet as a soloist for the 2013/14 season. There will also be two modern ballet performers from Tokyo and a cast of local ballet students.

Artjom Maksakov and Olga Malinovskaya perform. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

"It's an amazingly unique opportunity for the Saipan audience to witness the performance of ballet stars who are also on the list of the 100 best ballet dancers of the world," Glushko said.

Performing Arts Society president Dr. Gene Eagle-Oden told Rotary Club members that they need financial support and help.

"Your contribution to the Performing Arts Society will be acknowledged widely, in print and praise…your generosity will help tremendously toward bringing what would otherwise be unachievable," he said.

"We are your friends with a mutual interest—to make Saipan is a better place to live and grow up by being introduced and aware of culture, the broader world around us, and the contribution society can add to the lives of our children and families," Eagle-Oden added.

Since 2002, Glushko's Academy has produced an annual ballet production for Saipan that includes performances by world-class ballet stars, all choreographed together with the island's 45 local ballet students.

The annual production provides the only opportunity for residents of the CNMI to experience ballet in person for themselves and possibly in their lifetime.

The Performing Arts Society is a non-profit organization that was only organized in 2013. It has taken the initiative to further develop and support the struggling performing arts on Saipan. ***(Jayson Camacho)***

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Contact Loida or one of our friendly staffs

"A Tradition of Excellence!"
Marianas Eye Institute proudly welcome renowned eye surgeon, Dr. Dennis Williams, who has moved to Saipan to serve you and your families alongside Dr. Robertson. The tradition of excellence continues!
- Listed in "Best Doctors in America"
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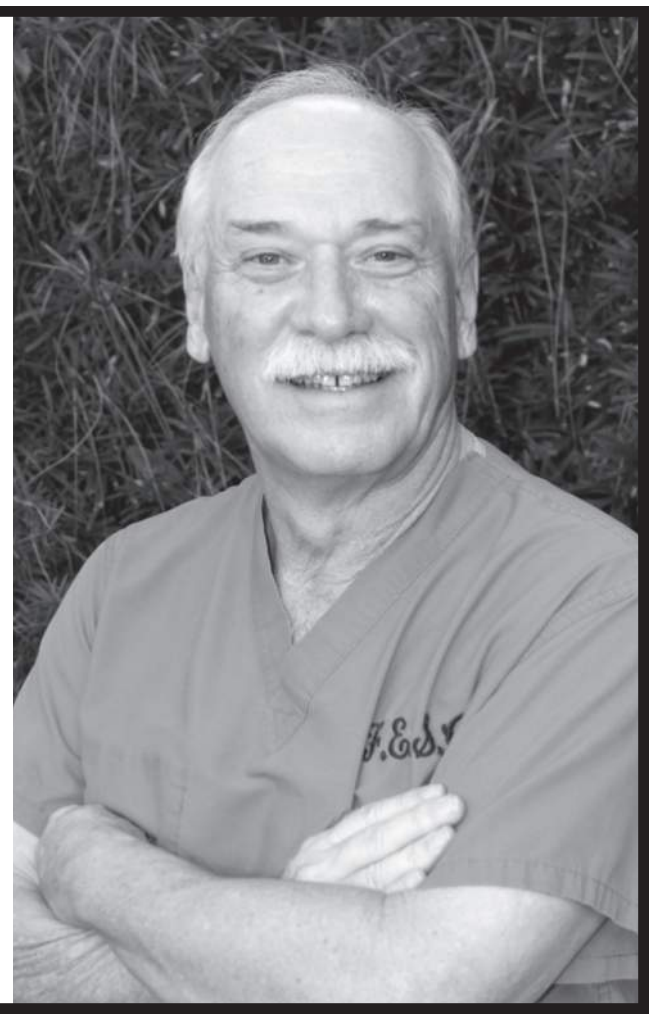

NMC all set for tomorrow's Career Fair

Three more companies have signed on to recruit for new employees at tomorrow's Career Fair at the Northern Marianas College: Triple J Saipan, Marianas Health, and YCO. They will be joining many other companies who have already confirmed their participation.

"We've signed up additional companies and we are ready for Thursday's Career Fair," said Neda Deleon Guerrero, Career Services manager.

The Career Fair is aimed at helping individuals who are looking for jobs to meet and connect with private sector companies, non-profit organizations, and government agencies that are looking to fill key vacancies within their organizations.

Community members who are seeking jobs are encouraged to attend. There is no charge to participate at the Career Fair.

The following organizations have also confirmed their participation in Thursday's Career Fair: Employment Services and WIA (Workforce Investment Agency), Hyatt Regency Saipan, Sorensen Media group, CDI Workforce Development, Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority, DFS Saipan, and the CNMI Office of Personnel Management.

Additionally, J.C. Tenorio Enterprises, Pacific Islands Club, Commonwealth Utilities Corp., CNMI Head Start Program, Public School System, Pacifica Insurance, Northern Marianas College Human Resources, College Access Challenge Grant, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence will also be there to recruit for employees or to provide information about their organizations.

"We are really excited that many companies have signed up to be a part of this year's Career Fair," said Deleon Guerrero. "I hope that job seekers take advantage of this event by coming to meet with prospective employers."

The event will be held Thursday, April 3, from 9am to 12pm in NMC's Room D1.

Individuals who plan on attending the Career Fair but have no transportation are encouraged to call the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority to request for free transportation to and from the fair. Jobseekers who need rides must make a reservation by calling 664-2690, texting 483-4344, or emailing cnmicallaride@gmail.com.

For further information about the Career Fair, contact Deleon Guerrero at 237-6759 or via email at neda.dlguerrero@marianas.edu or visit www.marianas.edu. The Career Fair is supported by the College Access Challenge Grant program. ***(NMC)***

HANMI Go-Kart Race kicks off on Sunday

HANMI

HANMI president Nick Nishikawa, third from right, leads other HANMI members in accepting Marpac's $3,000 title sponsorship donation for the upcoming 2014 HANMI Go-Kart Championship. From left, Carlos Rivera, Century Hotel; Gloria Cavanagh, GM, Marianas Resort & Spa; Guy Pudney GM, Marpac; Nishikawa, GM, Hyatt Regency Saipan; William Retardo, Mariana Resort & Spa; and James Lee, sales manager, Marpac.

Go-kart racing will be at its finest on Saipan this Sunday, April 6, with the staging of the Budweiser Go-Kart Championship at the Mariana Seaside Circuit of Mariana Resort & Spa.

The race is being organized by the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Set as one of HANMI's signature events, the Budweiser Go-Kart Championship is open to go kart aficionado who can form a team of four individuals (3 drivers and 1 captain).

Registration fee is $300 per team. Opening ceremony is at 8am, while the race begins at 9am. There is no age limit and participants are required to submit a copy of their valid driver's license. Racers who are under 18 and don't have a license must have consent forms signed by their parents or guardians.

"It is open to the public but those underage need to sign the waiver form from and get signatures from their parents," Go-Kart Committee member Carlos Rivera said.

Prizes at stake are $2,000 for first place, $1,000 for second place, and $500 for third place.

Raffle drawings will also be held and the winning prizes are two round-trip tickets to Japan.

Mariana Seaside Circuit, which opened to the public in April 1998, features 18 turns or corners.

Rivera encourages kart race enthusiasts to register early because 16 teams have already registered for the event and they need at least 18 to 20 teams. Deadline for registration is April 3, Thursday.

According to Go-Kart Committee chair William Retardo, all of the event's proceeds will go to HANMI.

"The reason we are hosting this event is for people to enjoy, and Marianas Resort has a good race track so we can make use of it. The funding will also go to the community through donations. This event is for people to enjoy and like all other sports event we host, it's for the community," said HANMI president Nick Nishikawa. ***(Jayson Camacho)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Secretary of Public Works
2nd Floor Joeten Commercial Building, Oleai, Saipan, MP 96950

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
DPW/SWM14-RFP-001

MARPI LANDFILL OPERATIONS

Governor Eloy S. Inos and Lt. Governor Jude U. Hofschneider, through the Secretary of Public Works, are soliciting sealed proposals from qualified companies or individuals for the Marpi Landfill Operations, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This procurement is made in accordance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, dated May 24, 2001. Proposal procedures shall be in full compliance with **§70-30.3-210** (competitive sealed proposals) of the Procurement Regulations.

The Scope of Work will be available on or after **March 26, 2014** at the Department of Public Works, Solid Waste Management Division, Lower Base Refuse Transfer Station, Saipan, MP 96950. A mandatory Pre-proposal Conference is scheduled for 9:30 a.m., local time, at the Solid Waste Management Division, Lower Base Refuse Transfer Station on **April 14, 2014**. Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to Mr. Enrique Dela Cruz, Director of Solid Waste Management Division, Lower Base Refuse Transfer Station, Saipan, or fax to (670) 322-2762 no later than 4:00 p.m., local time, **April 21, 2014**.

Proposals must be sealed and marked **"DPW/SWM14-RFP-001."** For proposers within the CNMI, one original and five (5) copies of sealed proposal must be submitted to the Director of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, MP 96950 no later than 10:00 a.m., local time, **April 30, 2014**.

Proposers located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their proposal by submitting a **Notice of Intent to Propose**. Notices of Intent to submit proposals must be received by the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than 10:00 a.m., local time, **April 30, 2014**, and may be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515 or via email to procurement@pticom.com. For proposers located outside the CNMI, one original and five (5) copies of sealed proposals must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **April 30, 2014** and must be received no later **May 9, 2014**. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be caused for rejection of proposal.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers in accordance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations. Proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion and revision of proposals and such revisions may be permitted after submission and prior award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offer. In conducting discussions, there shall be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers. All responses to this RFP should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the proposer awarded a contract.

The firm selected will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations NMIAC Section **70-30.3-245** and must be able to obtain a CNMI Business License prior to contract award.

Procurement of these services is made in accordance with NMIAC Section 70-30.3-210 of the CNMI Procurement Regulations. Proposals for the project will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1)	**Background and Qualification**	**30%**
2)	**Operational and Contingency Plans**	**30%**
3)	**Equipment**	**30%**
4)	**Price**	**10%**

Technical merit is more important than price and the Government reserves the right to award to other than the lowest proposer.

Award shall be made to the responsible proposer whose proposal is determined in writing to be most advantageous to the government taking into consideration price and the evaluation factors set forth in this request for proposal. No other factors or criteria shall be used in the evaluation.

The government reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive any imperfection in a proposal if in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All proposals shall become the property of the CNMI government.

/s/ MARTIN C. SABLAN
Secretary of Public Works

/s/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
Director of Procurement & Supply

ZONING PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

This is to inform the general public that the Zoning Office staff will be conducting outfield inspections and enforcement activities on Friday, April 4, 2014, and therefore the office will be closed from 12:00-4:30 pm. Normal operations will resume on Monday, April 7, 2014.

We apologize for any inconvenience, and we thank you for your understanding.

Sincerely,

The Commonwealth Zoning Board / Zoning Office

NFL names CNMI National Team to represent NMI in Kansas

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The members of the CNMI Team that will compete in the national NFL competitions in Kansas in June this year gather for a group photo after the awarding rites Saturday night at Marianas High School's Dolphin Theater.

After nearly four days of back-to-back competition, the CNMI National Forensic League awarded 16 students with gold medals and a trip to Overland Park, Kansas, in June, where the students will represent the CNMI in their categories and compete with over 5,000 other students from around the globe.

The competition was spread out during the week in order for coordinators to have ample time to tabulate score sheets and for students to compete in the several categories they participated in. The students were named members of the national team at the regional contest held Saturday at Marianas High School.

The tandem of Marianas High School's Yukki Nishida and Jayrold Mercene will represent the islands in duo interpretation. Marianas Baptist Academy's Kanata Omori will compete in the U.S extemporaneous speech category. Mount Carmel School's Thomas Manglona II will compete in the Lincoln-Douglas Debate; MHS' Masrur Alam, in the foreign extemporaneous speech; Saipan Southern High School's Katrina Punzalan, original oratory; SSHS' Trianna Del Rosario, Chamorro dramatic interpretation; MBA's Alina Ishikawa, dramatic interpretation, MCS' Soon Hyung Kwon, humorous interpretation; SSHS' Devina Atalig, Chamorro poetry; GCA's Mina Ito, expository speech; MHS' Ann Norcio, commentary; Saipan International School's Minori Yoshida, prose; GCA's Yujin Lee, poetry; GCA's Dong Ha Lee, storytelling; and MHS' Scarlet Chen, impromptu.

MHS sophomore Scarlet Chen said the experience was both intense and exciting. This will be Chen's first time to participate in the high school national speech and debate tilt. "Everyone was so good and I feel this is going to help me a lot in the future," she said.

Dong Ha Lee said he is excited to see "what the national level has in store" for the team. "It is definitely a blessing and NFL has changed my life."

Soon Kwon, a senior at MCS, told *Saipan Tribune* that "the pressure was on once I made it to the final round." This will be his last year traveling to represent the CNMI. "Everyone was so good. I felt all the pressure from other competitors and the judges in my last performance for my high school career," he said.

The CNMI sends delegates to the speech and debate tilt annually and has consistently brought home several awards and recognitions.

According to NFL board chair Harold Easton, last week's regionals had a total of 60 competitors. He said this year's national team is "representative of the teams we have had in the past."

Due to financial constraints in the Public School System, the students and their parents may need to fundraise for a fraction of their total trip expenses. The CNMI NFL organization in the past has sent students under similar conditions. This year, according to school officials, the trip is not categorically guaranteed.

However Easton told the students that one thing is for sure: "This will be one of the best experiences of your life." ***(Thomas A. Manglona II)***

STATE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES HK REQUEST FOR EXTRADITION

Property mogul Zeng agrees to be extradited to HK

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Alleged Hong Kong fugitive and property mogul Wei Zeng waived his extradition rights yesterday and agreed to be brought to Hong Kong.

The U.S. Department of State has already received a formal request from the Hong Kong government to extradite Zeng.

Assistant U.S. attorney Jessica F. Cruz informed the U.S. District Court for the NMI on Saturday about the State Department's receipt of the extradition request.

Attorney Bruce Berline, counsel for Zeng, filed Zeng's affidavit of waiver of extradition yesterday in federal court.

Zeng concedes that he is the individual against whom charges are pending in Hong Kong and for whom an arrest warrant is outstanding there.

Zeng agreed that probable cause exists to believe that he committed the offenses for which extradition was requested.

He said he executed the waiver of rights knowingly, voluntarily, and entirely on his own free will.

Assistant U.S. attorney Cruz said the State Department received the extradition request prior to the March 28, 2014, deadline, in compliance with Article 10 of the extradition treaty between Hong Kong and the U.S.

Cruz said the request was sent via Federal Express and is en route from the U.S. Department of State to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Guam. The U.S. Attorney's Office, Cruz said, will file the formal extradition request upon receipt.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona recently dismissed the two criminal cases filed against Zeng, also known as Zhi Qian Liu, after the U.S. government asked for the dismissal.

However, Manglona said that Zeng remains in custody under a detention order in a separate extradition matter.

Last February, Zeng pleaded not guilty to the indictment charging him with use of false document and misuse of passport.

The U.S. government also filed a criminal complaint, charging him of lying to a federal agency. He also pleaded not guilty to the charge.

Zeng arrived at the Francisco C. Ada Saipan International Airport last Jan. 16 from Shanghai, China. He allegedly used a different identity to try to enter Saipan.

The Hong Kong government is seeking Zeng's extradition due to a pending case against him. According to the U.S. government, the Hong Kong District Court issued a warrant for Zeng's arrest after he allegedly bribed a Hong Kong bank official with HK$ 2.3 million ($300,000) in October 2010.

The cash was allegedly a reward for the bank official's help in a multi-million Hong Kong dollar loan extension application and for giving favorable credit information relating to Zeng's two companies.

L&T Group of Companies, Ltd. Is inviting qualified individuals to apply for the following position:

Accountant
Associate's Degree in Finance or Accounting with at least 3 years work related experience in financial management and/or payroll and general accounting procedures with emphasis on receivables and payable management. Proficient in the use of SAP R3 FICO system and MS Excel, Word and Power Point software. Must be able to work under time pressure and must work flexible hours. CPA not required.

Applications can be obtained and submitted at L&T Group of Companies, Ltd. office located on the 2nd Floor, JP Center Building at Beach Road, Garapan. Salaries will commensurate with qualifications and experience. To be considered, applications must be submitted no later than 5:00pm, April 04, 2014.

L&T Group of Companies, Ltd. is an Equal Opportunity Employer.
Qualified women, minorities and disabled persons are encouraged to apply.

Procurement And Supply
CNMI Government

INVITATION TO BID

ITB NO.: ITB14-DPS/OHSR-075
SUBMISSION/OPENING DATE: APRIL 29, 2014 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"PURCHASE OF AN OCCUPANT PROTECTION/CHILD RESTRAINT TRAILER FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, ROTA DPS TRAFFIC SECTION"

Copies of the specifications may be picked-up at the Office of the Director, Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base Dr., Saipan, during regular working hours.
T
The Commonwealth reserves the right to reject any and all bids and proposals; in whole or in part, and to waive any imperfection in a bid in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All bids shall become the property of the CNMI government.

/S/ JAMES C. DELEON GUERRERO
Commissioner of DPS

/s/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
Director, P&S

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
PSS HEAD START PROGRAM
P.O. BOX 501370 • SAIPAN, MP 96950
Phone: (670) 664-3751/68 Fax: (670) 664-3760

Head Start Policy Council Special Meeting Agenda

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, the Head Start Policy Council hereby gives notice that it will have a Special Meeting on Thursday, April 3, 2014 at 5:30 p.m., Oleai Head Start Resource Center, Oleai, Saipan.

- **I. Preliminary Matters**
  1. Call to Order
  2. Roll Call
  3. Quorum
  4. Adoption of Agenda
  5. Adoption of Minutes of March 26, 2014
- **II. Public Comments**[1]
- **III. Tabled Items**
  1. Adoption of Minutes of February 27, 2014
- **IV. Old Business**
  1. Overall Health & Safety Report and Progress
  2. Updates:
     1. Self Assessment Report
     2. Community Assessment Report
     3. Child Outcomes Report
- **V. New Business**
  1. Lead Screening and 45 Day Requirement Results
  2. Approval of Parent Activity Fund Requests
- **VI. Miscellaneous Matters**
- **VII. Executive Session**[2]
- **VIII. Next Meeting**
- **IX. Adjournment**

This meeting is open to the public, interested individuals are welcome to attend.

/s/ Roy Ada
Chairperson

[1]Pursuant to BOE Policy 0415, public comments are limited to 30 minutes. We ask that remarks be limited to 3 minutes each. Everyone is welcomed to submit written comments.
[2]Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Council may vote to meet in executive session at any time.

Plants available from UOG, Agriculture

UOG

Ruby Sablan and Robert Mendi at work in the tissue culture lab.

Since 2010, the Guam Department of Agriculture and the University of Guam have been partnering to produce diseasAe-free plants available to farmers for local production. The Tissue Culture Program, administered by UOG researcher Alicja Wiecko, has been very successful in propagating banana, taro and yam plants for Guam's farmers and backyard growers.

"This collaborative effort gives Guam farmers a unique opportunity to grow new plant varieties that are disease free or disease resistant. It helps local growers keep the traditional crops of banana, taro and yam in production in their own backyards. Next year we will expand to ornamental plants thanks to a new USDA grant that includes tissue culture orchids, specifically Dendrobium and Phalaenopsis," said Wiecko.

The Tissue Culture Program built two fully equipped laboratories at the Department of Agriculture. The program employs four full and part time technicians skilled in tissue culture propagation. Rosalyn Kikuchi leads the team responsible for producing plants that originate from a small number of mother cells. They grow on agar media in plastic boxes and when tissue culture propagated plants are sufficiently matured, they are transferred outdoors, potted and placed in screened-off sections of the greenhouse. Field technicians Frank Megofna and Joseph Entilla make sure the young plants are well cared for and protected from insects and diseases.

Department of Agriculture management specialist Ricardo Lizama oversees all technical aspects of the program. He also maintains the only-one-of-its-kind collection of over 30 taro varieties, more than 20 varieties of bananas and numerous yam varieties.

Director Mariquita F. Taitaque administers the Tissue Culture Program organizationally and is highly supportive. "We are proud to give Guam growers access to traditional crops that are free of disease and ready for planting," said Taitaque. "We are also open to suggestions from the farming community for requests for specific plant varieties that we could produce in the Tissue Culture Program."

UOG students also benefit from the TCP through the opportunity to work in the rigorous environment of sterile laboratory conditions. Ruby Sablan, who has been working as a lab technician, recently returned from an interview for a doctorial program at West Virginia University. "The interviewers were very impressed that I already had experience working under a Laminar Flow Hood and with the skills I have acquired working with Ms. Wiecko at the lab," said Sablan. She has been accepted into the doctorial program in pharmaceutical studies for the Fall 2014 semester.

A UOG graduate from the tropical agriculture program, Robert Mendi, also works at the lab. "I did a lot of field work as an undergraduate and working at the tissue culture lab has allowed me to expand my understanding of a different aspect of agriculture. I am certain this experience will help me in making a decision as to a future field of study in a master's program," said Mendi.

Alicja Wiecko highly encourages ambitious students with knowledge in biological studies to apply to the Tissue Culture Program for a position at the lab. "The experience of working at a tissue culture laboratory builds a good resume for most plant research programs," said Wiecko.

Wiecko also invites science teachers to contact her to arrange for small group field trips to visit the Tissue Culture Laboratory and a greenhouse. For more information and to get healthy plants for your garden or farm, please contact Alicja Wiecko at 735-2140 or Ricardo Lizama at 300-7974. ***(UOG)***

Baseball league to host fundraiser for Micro Games

The Saipan Baseball League, in collaboration with Budweiser/Aloha Maid, Naked Fish Cafe, and KKMP, invites everyone to a "Happy Hour" Fundraiser to benefit the CNMI National Baseball Team's airfare expenses, holder of the last Micronesian Games Silver Medal in Palau. Lots of prizes will be given away to the lucky winners of a raffle that will be going on throughout the night.

The fundraiser will be held on Wednesday, April 2, 2014, at the Naked Fish Café in Susupe, from 5:30pm to 11pm. It will cost $10 per ticket with one free drink (Budweiser/BudLite/Aloha Maid).

You may purchase your ticket(s) from any of the following individuals: Tony Rogolifoi (285-3966/234-6672), Bernard Cabrera (287-7252), Rose Igitol (287-1129), or at the following: MARPAC Office in Gualo Rai (234-7113), KKMP Radio (233-1440) and at the Naked Fish Café (235-3474. ***(PR)***

RED FLAGS

3 Saipan beaches red-flagged

The Division of Environmental Quality has red-flagged three Saipan beaches and is advising the public not to fish or swim within 300 feet of these locations for the next 48 hours or until otherwise notified. Affected sites are Marine Beach, Obyan Beach, and Lader Beach.

Samples collected from these locations contained excessive concentrations of fecal indicator bacteria (enterococci) that exceeded the CNMI Marine Water Quality Standards. These bacteria can indicate the presence of human and animal waste in the water.

DEQ analyzes water samples collected from Saipan's recreational beaches and storm drainage every Tuesday. For more information, contact DEQ at 664-8500. ***(DEQ)***

2 Rota sites red-flagged

The Division of Environmental Quality has red-flagged two Rota site—the Mobil storm drain and District 2 storm drain—and is advising the public not to fish or swim within 300 feet of these locations for the next 48 hours or until otherwise notified.

Samples collected from these locations contained excessive concentrations of fecal indicator bacteria (enterococci) that exceeded the CNMI Marine Water Quality Standards. These bacteria can indicate the presence of human and animal waste in the water. For more information, contact DEQ at 664-8500. ***(DEQ)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy 27th birthday to my pillar of support, anchor in life, biggest fan, loyal supporter, emotional healer, eye candy, and most important of all—an amazing father, my loving husband, Gary Jacque Sablan Cruz. May God continue to bless you each and everyday. We love you daddy! Greetings come from DJ, Dame, and your wifey!

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy, happy birthday to Kaia DeJesus Travilla, who is celebrating her 10th birthday today, April 2! Have a great and wonderful day and may you be blessed with many more birthdays to come! Keep up all the great work! We are happy and proud of you! Much love coming from your Mama and Papa, your Kuya Robby, Kuya Raynard, and Ate Cherisse, Kuya Barney, Rianna Joy, Ta Ji, Tito Natz, Lola, Tita Delma, Tito Chris, and the entire Afetna Compound La Familia!

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

April 2, 2006

'CUC transfer is temporary'

The transfer of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. to the Department of Public Works is only temporary and that, once it is "cured" of its woes, it will revert to its original status: an independent utilities corporation, said Gov. Benigno R. Fitial. During a press conference Friday afternoon on Capitol Hill, Fitial said that the executive order he signed, which placed CUC under DPW effective last week, will be in place for only a limited time. "The executive order is only a temporary measure. One of the main problems at CUC is the lack of effective and sound management. We issued this memo so we can [effectively] control CUC. …As soon as we get everything in place, CUC [will be CUC again]," said Fitial.

Petron eyes fuel farm on Saipan

Top officials of Petron Corp. are set to arrive on Saipan next week to look at the possibility of putting up a fuel farm here, said Gov. Benigno R. Fitial Friday. Petron, the Philippines' leading oil refining and marketing company, is owned by the Philippine National Oil Company and Saudi Aramco, which is said to be the world's largest oil producer, each having a 40-percent share of equity. The remaining shares are owned by close to 200,000 individual stockholders and institutional investors. Fitial said Petron president and chief executive officer Khalid D. Al-Faddagh and chairman Nicasio Alcantara are expected to lead the delegation on April 6.

April 2, 2007

No NMI witnesses yet for US House hearing

The U.S. House subcommittee on Insular Affairs has not come up with a final list of witnesses from the CNMI for its oversight hearing on the CNMI situation this month. "At this time, there is no finalized witness list," said subcommittee staff director Tony Babauta in an e-mail message Friday, a copy of which was obtained by the Saipan Tribune. Washington Rep. Pete A. Tenorio said this week that the newly created subcommittee will hold an oversight hearing on "current economic, social and security conditions of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands" on April 19 in Washington D.C. Tenorio said it will be the first of two hearings.

Taylor tops HANMI Charity Classic

One hundred and one local golfers tried their luck in the 6th Annual HANMI Charity Classic last Saturday at the west course of Laolao Bay Golf Resort. The fundraising event, hosted and organized by the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, aims to raise money that will benefit the CNMI Crime Stoppers, the Marianas Tourism Economic Council, and the Saipan Rotary Club for the skater park. Last year 112 joined the tournament where the beneficiaries of the funds were the Marianas March Against Cancer, the Micronesian Games, and MINA. Jeff Taylor bested eight of the CNMI's top golfers to win the Championship Flight.

April 2, 2008

Child sex abuse on the rise

The Division of Youth Services has reported 572 child abuse cases throughout the CNMI last fiscal year, the highest of which is child sexual abuse, with a reported 156 cases from October 2006 to September 2007. The 156 reported cases are a sharp spike compared to the 44 cases reported in 2000. According to Child Protection Services supervisor Laura Ogumuro, the CNMI is seeing a rising trend in the area of child sexual abuse. In past fiscal years, the total number of sexual abuse cases "is not even half of the 156 reported in fiscal year 2007." For the new fiscal year—October 1, 2007 to present—there have already been 42 reported cases of child sexual abuse.

Forum takes up status for long-term alien workers

The issue of granting resident status to long-term nonresident workers in the CNMI will be the subject of a forum that will be held tonight at the Monte Carlo, a bar located across Hopwood Junior High School, starting at 6:30pm. The forum, called "Long-Term Resident Status: Issues and Possibilities for Change Under CNMI Law," will feature four speakers who will discuss the issue with the audience. Members of the Unity Movement organizers core group—Malou Barueco; Bonnie Sagana of the Dekada Movement; Conrad Ocampo; and Ernest Maicle of MOVER—said that tonight's forum is open to the public.

Guam community unite to end sexual assault, child abuse

MANGILAO, Guam—The U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force and Guam communities formed a united front to end sexual assault and child abuse during a joint proclamation signing at the Guam Community College in Mangilao yesterday, April 1.

April was declared Sexual Assault Awareness and Child Abuse Prevention Month in an effort to encourage community members to take an active stand against these issues.

"This is not just a military problem," said U.S. Naval Base Guam Commanding Officer Capt. Mike Ward. "This is a community problem that we need to collaborate together to address."

Military and government of Guam advocates share information and work with each other to foster relationships and spread awareness of these issues that affect the community.

Ward emphasized that although the military has many programs specific to sexual assault and child abuse, it is important for every organization to share information in order to prevent such crimes.

U.S. NAVY/JOANNA DELFIN

U.S. Naval Base Guam Commanding Officer Capt. Mike Ward delivers remarks before declaring April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month during a joint proclamation signing at the Guam Community College in Mangilao on April 1.

U.S. NAVY/JOANNA DELFIN

Sailors, airmen, and civilians from Joint Region Marianas and U.S. Naval Base Guam attend a joint proclamation signing at the Guam Community College in Mangilao on April 1.

U.S. NAVY/JOANNA DELFIN

From left: Col. Jason Armagost, 36th Wing vice commander, Guam Lt. Gov. Guam Ray Tenorio, and Capt. Mike Ward, U.S. Naval Base Guam commanding officer, sign proclamations declaring April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month during a joint proclamation signing at the Guam Community College in Mangilao on April 1.

"Bringing our programs and tying them into the local community has been our biggest achievement," Ward said. "When we get that synergy and partnership, we will learn from each other."

According to Guam Lt. Gov. Ray Tenorio, the average number of child abuse cases in 2011 was about 10 per month.

"Every individual who is the victim of this sexual assault and family violence are scarred in a way and we as a community are responsible for acting in the best interests of those victims," Tenorio said. "We as individuals need to reach out to our families and be that channel to be able to give back, to be able to report."

36th Wing Vice Commander Col. Jason Armagost signed the Air Force's proclamation and said although programs are in place, communities need to be aware of the issues before they can be resolved.

U.S. NAVY/JOANNA DELFIN

Col. Jason Armagost, 36th Wing vice commander, delivers remarks before declaring April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month during a joint proclamation signing at the Guam Community College in Mangilao on April 1.

"The first thing that has to come from these programs and do them together is awareness," he said. "We learn from each other and we get at these problems together."

The military will hold various events throughout the month to educate the public about preventing and reporting sexual assault and child abuse. ***(JRM)***

SECOND TERM

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Diego Blanco is flanked by Gov. Eloy S. Inos, Lt. Gov. Jude U. Hofschneider, members of the Blanco family, members of the Commonwealth Zoning Board, and officials from the Zoning Office after being sworn in by Inos to serve a second term on the Zoning Board. Blanco was confirmed by the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation last week.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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EDITORIAL

Safeguards fail to protect military families

Three years ago, a congressional hearing put a spotlight on shameful home loan practices that subjected military families to overcharges, harassing collection calls, "accidental" foreclosures and the denial of special legal protections aimed at easing the financial strain of active-duty service.

While banking behemoths promised to fix mistakes, an alarming new report from a fledgling federal consumer protection agency makes it clear that abuses of military consumers are still occurring across the financial services industry and that heavy lifting is needed on the home front to enforce existing safeguards against predatory loans, evictions and default judgments and to guard against deceptive debt collectors.

The report—detailing dubious practices such as default judgments and attempts to collect nonexistent debts, as well as lack of awareness about military protections for home and student loans—was released this month by the Office of Servicemember Affairs, part of the new and embattled Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The CFPB's mission: to bring a consumer protection perspective to financial regulation and to provide federal oversight to parts of the market where it had been sorely lacking, such as payday lenders, debt collectors and credit reporting agencies. There was such concern about military families when the law was passed that Congress specified that the new agency would have a dedicated office for military consumers. Holly Petraeus, who has a long family history of military service, is the office's assistant director.

There are already solid laws on the books to protect the financial security of military men and women. Provisions under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act include a cap on interest rates, stays of proceedings and protections from evictions. The Military Lending Act guards against loans notorious for high interest rates, such as payday loans and auto title loans.

The problem is that service members often are unaware of these safeguards. Many financial firms appear to be as well or, worse, they choose to ignore them.

That increase is not only a reflection of military consumers' growing awareness of the CFPB, but of the need for an agency to assist them and all consumers with concerns like this. So far, the agency has recovered more than $1 million on behalf of military consumers. More important, by tracking mistreatment, spotlighting existing protections and helping consumers get resolution, the CFPB is helping to deter future abuses of our troops.

The good work by Petraeus and this agency should be lauded by policymakers. Instead, the CFPB is under attack in Congress, where the Republican-controlled House recently passed legislation to weaken it.

The CFPB is off to a promising start, as the new report from Petraeus' office shows. Lawmakers should let the agency do its work instead of doing the bidding of wealthy special interests to undermine its important mission.

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Mr. Obama, time to face international realities

By TRUDY RUBIN
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial-board member for the Philadelphia Inquirer*. Readers may write to her at:* Philadelphia Inquirer, *P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101, or by e-mail at trubin@phillynews.com.*

Dear President Obama:

Last week, you were super-busy in Europe, warning Vladimir Putin not to invade eastern Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Moscow's takeover of Crimea is a done deal, and there's even more worrying stuff going on elsewhere. Your CIA chief, John Brennan, just told a House panel that al-Qaida central is now using Syrian territory to train Western jihadis to attack Europe and America.

In Afghanistan (remember Afghanistan?), Taliban bombers are threatening this week's elections. They are getting help from the intelligence services of our supposed ally Pakistan even as we prepare to exit the country. Equally worrying, the Pakistani Taliban are wreaking havoc inside nuclear-armed Pakistan, whose government has no apparent strategy to counter them—except to beg for peace.

There's a link between all these headaches, and you sometimes seem to get it, but your foreign policy doesn't reflect that understanding. Isn't it time your team started connecting the dots?

We know you hoped the world had entered a new era in the 21st century in which nations could solve messy problems by diplomacy, not force. Putin put an end to such illusions. As they say in the military, "It is what it is," and your foreign policy has to adjust.

You were correct to say last week in Belgium that Russia isn't our top geopolitical threat (listen up, Mitt Romney). You are also right that Russia is only a "regional power" that mainly threatens its immediate neighbors (though your public insults to Putin could make him more aggressive).

You also said that you were "much more concerned when it comes to our security with the prospect of a nuclear weapon going off in Manhattan." In other words, the biggest threat to the United States is the possibility that jihadis could access nuclear weapons. Yet that threat is expanding on your watch.

Over the last two years, a new jihadi safe haven has emerged in large areas of eastern Syria stretching through western Iraq. Thousands of foreign jihadis have poured into the area, including about 1,200 American and European Muslims; some senior al-Qaida veterans arrived from Pakistan and may seek to coordinate attacks against the West. In March, Matthew Olsen, director of the National Counterterrorism Center, told a Senate committee that "al-Qaida has declared Syria its most critical front."

Yet for the last two years, as moderate Syrian rebel groups lost ground to better-armed jihadis, you refused to confront reality in Syria. You clung to a diplomatic strategy that depended on Putin to persuade his ally Assad to stand down. That hope was doomed from the beginning; Russia's strong backing of Assad at this year's Geneva II peace talks ensured that they would fail.

Yet, despite Putin's support for Assad, and despite his Crimea landgrab, your Syria policy has failed to adjust.

Your officials still insist that only diplomacy can end the conflict, but such diplomacy still depends on Russia. As Putin's move on Crimea should have made obvious, the Russian isn't moved by appeals to international law.

The only thing that might grab Putin's attention and compel him to bargain would be a shift in the playing field—if it looked as if Assad's fortunes were declining. Achieving that would require you to green-light delivery of portable antiaircraft systems that vetted Syrian rebel groups could use to shoot down Assad's planes and helicopters—which rain missiles and "barrel bombs" on civilians. (Even if Putin failed to respond, empowering vetted rebel groups would strengthen their hand against jihadis, as well.)

Yet your team is still haggling over whether to approve delivery of even a handful of such weapons. Yes, there is a risk that some might go astray, but that can be addressed by designing careful controls, which vetted rebel groups are ready to agree to.

If you remain paralyzed, Assad looks certain to retain power in the coastal part of the country and a belt that includes the major cities. The rest of Syria will remain a failed state, giving jihadis a safe haven from which to destabilize Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, and to threaten Israel—along with the West. Think of it as a new Afghanistan on the Mediterranean that shares a border with Turkey, a NATO nation.

Meantime, Afghanistan trembles under Taliban attack as U.S. forces exit. Next door, Pakistan's weak government and uncertain military fail to halt the growth of jihadi terrorism in their nuclear-armed country. One could imagine some of those Pakistani weapons someday finding their way to the new Syrian jihadistan.

So if you really believe nuclear terrorism is America's number-one security challenge, Mr. President, you can no longer dither over Syria.

You've sensibly said the United States won't use force against the Russians, even if Putin invades eastern Ukraine. In this case, we must play a long game, using economic and energy tools to constrain the Russian leader.

But on Syria, it's long past time to take a lesson from Putin and back diplomacy with power. To smash the new terrorist stronghold in Syria will take more than sending meals-ready-to-eat to moderate rebels. Tough talk is no substitute for deeds.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Price of the lack of foresight

By JOHN DELROSARIO
Special to the Saipan Tribune

John DelRosario Jr. is a former publisher of the Saipan Tribune *and a former secretary of the Department of Public Lands.*

Anyone who claims to be a leader knows, with a sense of intuitive understanding, foresight and insight, issues that matter the most for people he or she represents.

Obviously, we can't say the incumbents are endowed with such qualities and we need not beg the issue to probe what else is new. One only look at the miseries of livelihood today to understand conditions at home.

Miserable conditions may be sinking deeper into the corner of despair or hopelessness or both while many of us had hoped that there would emerge a visionary that could organize a blueprint of hope for these isles. Plans, like road signs, give direction to places we wish to go. There are signs too that warn us in advance what to expect ahead.

The boom years came and faded into history. Didn't people at the helm see the economic foundation swaying dangerously at the base? Or were they sleeping on the navigational switchboard as to crash directly into the iceberg? Let's look at some issues:

The missing equation that has deepened the current mess is the lack of leadership and a set of plans to navigate the erratic turns in the economic storm. It would have provided guidelines to move from point A-B while allowing for refinement of policies as we move forward.

Cost of power: The entire CNMI needs reliable, stable and affordable power. But the lack of depth of perception and understanding of issues turns into a dog chase tail show.

The lack of foresight fittingly compliments CUC's lack of a decent roadmap on how to resolve the power needs of the islands. This anomaly forced the closure of small businesses, the backbone of our community, and forced residential consumers to cut the use of power 24/7. So it isn't the loss of base-load consumers so much as rock bottom conservation.

Can the CNMI reasonably expect to see business expansion and investment or wouldn't power rates alone sufficiently deter growth to our detriment? So how do we improve revenue generation when expansion and investments head south or elsewhere as a result of very costly power bills?

Education: Our educational institutions can no longer play second fiddle in planning the education and future of these islands. It must join hands with key players with the goal to make NMC a four-year institution.

Upon attaining four-year status, NMC must equip itself with a highly reputable and credible "Research and Development Center." It should capably assist any and all planned socio-economic programs here. The R&D component is a must that is found in the most economically advanced countries at the global village. This component should foster and proactively partake in fully thought-out growth plans.

Healthcare: This sector is the most complicated of services that is highly costly in operations too. It requires ultra-dedication in all aspects of healthcare delivery. Today, we're dealing with a highly sick local population that is suffering from Type II diabetes or heart and other serious ailments.

Leadership is needed to view and assess the forest over the trees, so to speak. Sending heart patients to bypass factories in the Philippines or Hawaii is a serious matter that warrants full-scale review. Moreover, we must return emphasis to preventative healthcare over scrambling to handle catastrophic illnesses.

The CNMI has a lot of substantive issues that require focus and attention. We thought we had foresight as the elixir to fix our own mess. Strange though that our foresight has been and is still glued to the rearview mirror! Call it "advancing to the rear."

Navigating hopelessness

The young folks are struggling and sifting to make sense of leadership's negligence that abandoned their future. They're suffocating against hope of finding brighter tomorrows.

Interesting how the same clowns and goons have spouted concerns about the future of our young people. Yet, when you measure their accomplishments on this score, the net result is a woefully humiliating ZERO! In fact, I have a truckload of useless fat zeroes.

I could envision standing by the pier watching our Canoe of Hope sink steadily in the harbor before it even sets sail. If it topples over, there goes the future of our young people. Nah! Let me have your tiny hands so I could pull you off the sinking canoe.

Walk with us and let's rebuild the future together. We could reclaim these isles and rebuild the bridge of economic prosperity for you and the younger ones walking with you. We could do it with or without the fossilized goons upstairs!

This too shall pass

Do not be disheartened nor derailed by the deepening mess at home. I'm a strong believer that we could forcefully inflict change for the better. The removal of zombie-like impediments upstairs ought to open up opportunities to rebuild a bright new morning for you and generations behind you.

As difficult as it may seem, hold on tight for we shall move away from the powerful stench of apathy and indifference blowing into the villages from the hill. We must rely upon collective hope and genuine resiliency to pull through a few hurdles before we could hold the reins of change to make a difference. Believe in yourself for "this too shall pass!"

■ ■ ■

The prevailing myopic view of the elected elite is the very culprit of the mess at home. It fits the second group of the three kinds of people, "…those who didn't know what happened…" No wonder it's a sad day, everyday, in paradise!

Chuck Hagel: The Asia pivot is still on

By DOYLE MCMANUS
Los Angeles Times

Doyle McManus is a columnist for The Los Angeles Times*. Readers may send him e-mail at doyle.mcmanus@latimes.com.*

Russian troops are massing menacingly on Ukraine's eastern border. The civil war in Syria is still raging, and 33,000 American troops fight on in Afghanistan. So where is Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel headed this week? To Hawaii—for a meeting with defense ministers from Asia, the region the Obama administration still considers its top foreign policy priority.

"Asia is one of the great success stories of the world," Hagel told me in an interview in his Pentagon office last week. "There is really today in Asia, in the Asia Pacific region, no open conflict."

"What's happened in Ukraine is a good example of brute force, of hard power," he said. "(And) hard-power conflict is always going to be with us."

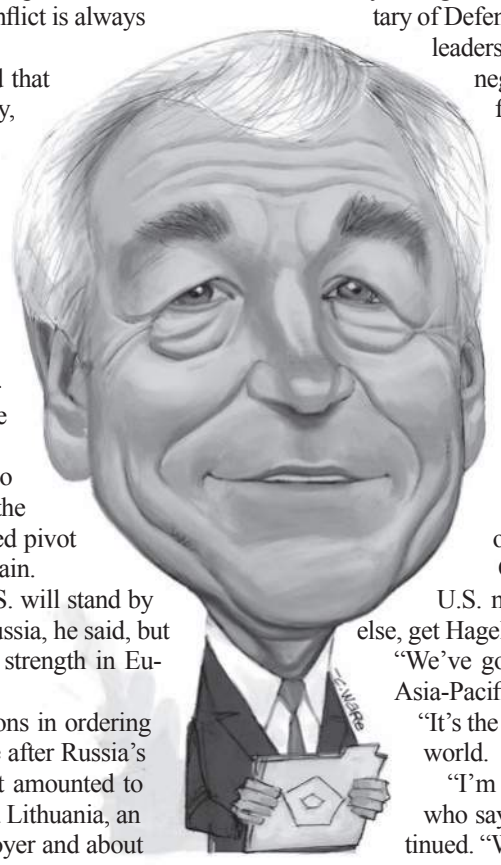
But the administration remains convinced that deploying "soft power" tools of diplomacy, security cooperation and trade can often prevent hard-power showdowns. In that realm, Hagel said, "Asia-Pacific has pointed the way," he said.

After his meetings in Hawaii, which will include soft-power sessions on trade and disaster relief as well as military cooperation, Hagel will head to Japan and China for thornier talks about security problems, including territorial conflict over islands in the East China Sea.

Hagel's trip is a deliberate statement to those who think the crisis in Ukraine means the administration should delay its long-promised pivot to Asia or even pivot back toward Europe again.

That won't happen, Hagel insists. The U.S. will stand by its NATO allies in any confrontation with Russia, he said, but there's no plan to increase American troop strength in Europe.

The White House has ballyhooed its actions in ordering U.S. military units to bolster Eastern Europe after Russia's seizure of Crimea. But in fact, they haven't amounted to much: 18 fighter jets deployed to Poland and Lithuania, an extended Black Sea cruise for a Navy destroyer and about 300,000 prepackaged field rations (but no weapons) for the Ukrainian armed forces.



U.S. support for Ukraine "has not pulled any assets away" from Asia or any other region, Hagel noted.

That minimalist military response to the Ukraine crisis stems mostly from Obama's desire to avoid escalating the conflict. Even if Russia moves troops into eastern Ukraine, Hagel said, the United States is staying out.

But it also reflects the Obama administration's larger map: Eastern Europe isn't among the president's top priorities. Asia still is.

Ironically, though, after spending much of his first year as secretary of Defense reassuring European and Middle Eastern leaders that a "rebalance" toward Asia didn't mean neglect for other parts of the world, Hagel now finds himself reassuring Asians that the pivot is still on.

That's partly because of skepticism from some of his own people. This month, Assistant Secretary of Defense Katrina McFarland told a conference that budget cuts meant the pivot was being reconsidered "because, candidly, it can't happen." (She retracted the comment, presumably under pressure from her bosses, later the same day.) And last week, the commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific, Adm. Samuel Locklear, told Congress that he didn't have enough submarines or landing craft to carry out his missions adequately.

Questions about the global perception of U.S. military retrenchment, in Asia or anywhere else, get Hagel agitated.

"We've got over 330,000 personnel deployed in the Asia-Pacific, 180 ships, over 2,000 aircraft," he said. "It's the largest combatant command we have in the world.

"I'm always a bit amused, perplexed, by people who say we're retreating from the world," he continued. "Where are we retreating from?" And he ticks off all the areas where U.S. military forces are active—not only East Asia and Europe and Afghanistan but the Middle East and Africa as well.

So yes, the budget plan Hagel sent to Congress this month calls for a smaller Army, a smaller Marine Corps, fewer planes and fewer ships than planned. But the Defense secretary says that shouldn't matter.

The answer, he said, is to do more with less, both by helping friendly countries improve their own defenses and by relying on quality instead of quantity. The troops and ships and aircraft the United States deploys may be fewer than before, but they are more capable than their predecessors.

On the big, long-term picture, Obama and Hagel are right: Asia and the Pacific are the most important region for U.S. interests. In trade, for example, U.S. exports to Asia are significantly larger than exports to Europe. Europe has NATO to keep the peace; Asia, without an equivalent regional organization, still relies on the U.S. Navy. And China is a dynamic, rising power—unlike Russia, which may be dangerous but isn't growing in most other ways.

"That's the big one," Hagel said. "We've really got to pay attention to that relationship and get it right."

But other crises and other regions keep getting in the way, as do the fiscal pressures that are pushing the defense budget downward with support from Republicans as well as Democrats.

Hagel, a former Republican senator and Vietnam War Army sergeant, got his turn as Defense secretary at an unenviable moment: a period of shrinking budgets, when tough choices among priorities can't be dodged.

This month, that means convincing leaders in Asia that the United States really can do more with less, and that it won't be distracted from its focus on the Pacific by hard-power crises in Ukraine or anywhere else.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Mostly sunny with a slight chance of showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼76°	▲87° ▼76°	▲88° ▼76°	▲88° ▼76°	▲88° ▼76°

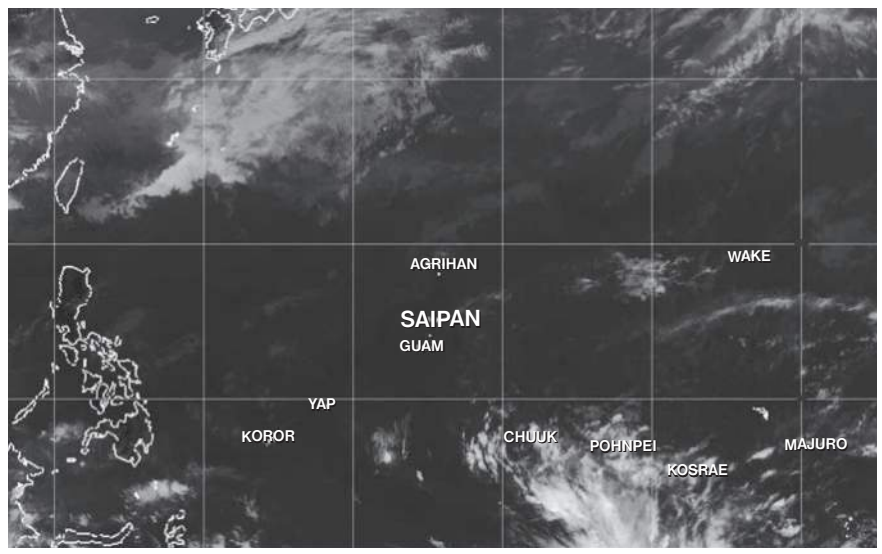
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Mostly Sunny	▲88	▼79
Palau	Mostly Sunny	▲87	▼77
Yap	Partly Cloudy	▲89	▼78
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	▲87	▼81
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼78
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼78
Majuro	Showers	▲86	▼80

Around The Globe

Auckland	Partly Cloudy	▲73	▼61
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	▲74	▼48
Hong Kong	Showers	▲71	▼69
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	▲83	▼71
London	Partly Cloudy	▲70	▼52
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲63	▼49
Manila	Partly Cloudy	▲93	▼79
Melbourne	Showers	▲75	▼58
Miami	Sunny	▲79	▼67
New York	Partly Cloudy	▲56	▼40
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	▲66	▼52
Paris	Partly Cloudy	▲71	▼56
Pusan	Mostly Sunny	▲64	▼54
Rome	Partly Cloudy	▲66	▼51
Salem	Showers	▲52	▼37
San Francisco	Rain	▲54	▼46
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	▲70	▼46
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	▲65	▼54
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	▲65	▼46

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2014
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A weak cold front extends west-southwestward from east of Minami Tori Shima at 35N157E to 24N149E then continues westward as a stationary front to 23N140E before transitioning to a warm front that curves west-northwestward beyond 130E at 25N. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are found well northwest of the Marianas along and up to 400 miles north of these boundaries west of 23N145E. A near-equatorial trough stretches northeastward from EQ140E to a tropical disturbance centered near 5N155E then turns southeast to end at EQ152E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are found over parts of Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae states between 8N and the equator from 148E to 161E. Trade-wind convergence is generating scattered showers over the Marshall Islands within 120 miles of a line from 7N166E to 8N174E to 7N180E. Weak trade-wind disturbances are generating scattered showers east of Wake Island within 130 miles of a line from 19N171E to 24N180.

Tides

Saipan Harbor

4:25 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.6 Feet
9:54 AM	Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet
4:48 PM	Today	Low Tide:	0.1 Feet
11:10 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.9 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:12 AM	6:29 PM
Thursday	6:11 AM	6:30 PM
Friday	6:11 AM	6:30 PM
Saturday	6:10 AM	6:30 PM
Sunday	6:09 AM	6:30 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	7:51 AM	8:49 PM
Thursday	8:39 AM	9:43 PM
Friday	9:28 AM	10:35 PM
Saturday	10:17 AM	11:25 PM
Sunday	11:07 AM	

Note: Blank spaces indicate that a rising or a setting did not occur during that 24-hour interval.

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF APRIL 2, 2014

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA5070	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA5068	8:00am	8:50am	3
UA5068	8:40am	9:30am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5078	3:10pm	4:00pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	6:55pm	8:35pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA5038	7:45pm	8:35pm	2, 6
UA5078	8:10pm	9:00pm	3

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA5039	8:00pm	8:35pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA5039	6:55pm	7:30pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL287	6:05am	8:45am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
DL297	4:30pm	7:25pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 5

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ606	2:20am	6:00am	1
OZ606	2:50am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
D2104	2:00pm	5:30pm	6
OZ604	3:30pm	6:55pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	4:00am	8:00am	1, 5

SAIPAN-GUANZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ606/701	2:20am	11:05am	1 via ICN
OZ606/701	2:50am	11: 05am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5070/191	4:15am	8:55am	3, 6, 7 via GUM
DL287/473	6:05am	10:40pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 6 via NRT
UA5068/183	8:00am	9:10pm	3 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	8:45pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	9:10pm	1, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
OZ604/703	3:30pm	10:45pm	Daily via ICN

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

OZ606/721	2:20am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ606/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5068/179	8:00am	9:55pm	3 via GUM
UA5078/179	3:10pm	9:55pm	1, 5, 6 via GUM
OZ604/749	3:30pm	11:00pm	Daily via ICN

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA5069	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA5071	6:40am	7:30am	3
UA5071	7:15am	8:05am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5077	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	5:35pm	6:25pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA5038	5:35pm	7:15pm	2, 6 via Rota
UA5077	6:50pm	7:40pm	3

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA5038	5:35pm	6:10pm	2, 6

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA5038	6:40pm	7:15pm	2, 6

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:25am	3:00pm	Daily
DL288	8:55pm	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	1:50am+1	3, 6

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ603	8:50am	2:20pm	Daily
OZ605	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ605	8:15pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:40pm	5:00am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	7:20pm	3:00am+1	4, 7

GUANZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

DL172/288	7:45am	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7 via NRT
UA190/5039	9:55am	6:25pm	7 via Guam
UA190/5038	9:55am	7:15pm	6 via Rota-Guam
UA190/5077	9:55am	7:40pm	3 via Guam
OZ702/605	12:15pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ702/605	12:15pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
UA184/5071	10:25pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
UA184/5038	10:25pm	7:15pm+1	1 via Rota-Guam
UA184/5071	11:30pm	7:30am+1	2 via Guam
UA184/5038	11:30pm	7:15pm+1	5 via Rota-Guam

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/605	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/605	1:10pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA180/5071	9:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; VLK: Vladivostok Air; SYL: Yakutia Air; D: Dynamic Airways; ORB: OREN AIR.

ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The *Saipan Tribune* is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

Business

GM recall: Many victims were young drivers

DETROIT (AP)—As the deaths are tallied from General Motors' delayed recall of compact cars, one thing is becoming clear: Of those killed, the majority were young.

In a way, this isn't surprising. Low-priced cars like the Chevrolet Cobalt and Saturn Ion were marketed to young, first-time buyers and parents shopping for their kids.

But price may not be the only reason for the disproportionate number of youthful deaths.

The faulty ignition switches behind the recall can shut off the engine while the car is in motion. When that happens, power-assisted steering and power brakes are lost, and the air bags won't inflate in a crash.

In such a situation, inexperienced drivers are more likely to panic and be overwhelmed by the extra effort needed to control the car, safety experts say.

GM has linked 13 deaths to the problem. Others have a higher total, with the majority of victims under age 25. Many also were women, who safety experts say are less likely to have the upper body strength to wrestle a stalled car safely to the side of the road.

"With an entry-level car where you have a newly licensed driver, the freak-out will win the day," said Robert Hilliard, a Texas personal injury lawyer who is suing GM in several cases. "All that those young drivers are going to do is respond to the panic."

GM has admitted knowing for at least a decade that the switches were defective. Yet it didn't start recalling 2.6 million Cobalts, Ions and other small cars worldwide until February. CEO Mary Barra has said GM's safety processes were lacking, and she has brought in an outside attorney to review them.

Through media reports and contacts on a Facebook page, Laura Christian, birth mother of Amber Marie Rose, who was killed in a 2005 Maryland wreck in which a Cobalt air bag didn't inflate, has found crashes that claimed 29 lives.

Of those, 15 were under age 25, and 18 were women. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, drivers ages 16 to 24 were involved in 23 percent of the 35,306 fatal crashes in the U.S. in 2012.

AP

This combination of undated family photos shows, from left, Amber Marie Rose, Natasha Weigel, and Amy Rademaker. All three were killed in deadly car crashes involving GM's Cobalt during 2005-2006. The complaint tally for the top-selling small cars in the 2005-2007 model years was: Corolla, 228; Cobalt, 164; Honda Civic, 60; Ford Focus, 25; and the Mazda 3, 19.

Japan raises sales tax, balancing debt, growth

TOKYO (AP)—Japan raised its sales tax Tuesday, moving to stabilize government finances but at the risk of undermining a shaky economic recovery.

It's a gamble the world's No. 3 economy cannot afford to take, given its soaring public debt.

Economists expect the sales tax hike, to 8 percent from 5 percent, to slow but not derail the recovery. It is the first such increase since 1997, when the combination of the tax hike, an unwinding of debt from Japan's bubble economy days and the impact of a regional financial crisis plunged the country into recession.

But recent data suggest the recovery may be less solid than Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had hoped for when he agreed to raise the tax last fall.

A quarterly central bank survey of Japan's major manufacturers released Tuesday, the "tankan," showed business confidence rose slightly, but was well below forecasts. The outlook for coming months was less rosy, with many companies worried over a consumer backlash following the tax hike.

The `Abenomics' economic strategy aims to spur inflation and pull Japan out of its two-decade economic slump by getting consumers and businesses to make purchases sooner rather than later. But so far wages have not risen, and the rising cost of living seems to be triggering still more belt-tightening.

Abe has promised 5 trillion yen ($48 billion) in fresh stimulus for the economy, and still more if the tax hike proves a harsher blow than the government expects. In theory, rising consumer demand should help push wages higher, especially given the shrinking of Japan's labor force as its population falls and ages. But while some major manufacturers have raised wages slightly, employers overall have instead increased overtime work and hiring of part-time workers.

NHTSA to require rearview cameras in new vehicles

By STACY A. ANDERSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP)—Years late, the Transportation Department issued a rule Monday that will require rearview technology in all new cars and many light trucks—an effort to reduce deaths and serious injuries caused by backup accidents.

The final rule issued by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will require all new vehicles under 10,000 pounds and built beginning May 1, 2018, to meet the new rear-visibility standards. The rule includes buses and trucks; motorcycles and trailers are exempt.

The rearview cameras can be mounted on many different parts of the vehicle somewhere on the rear of the car. They must give drivers a field of vision measuring at least 10 by 20 feet directly behind the vehicle. The system must also meet other requirements including dashboard image size, lighting conditions and display time.

Backup accidents involving light vehicles cause an average of 210 deaths and 15,000 injuries a year, and victims often are children and the elderly, the government said. Children under 5 years old account for 31 percent of the deaths each year, while adults 70 years of age and older represent about 26 percent.

NHTSA said the new rule, required in the Cameron Gulbransen Kids Transportation Safety Act, will save between 13 to 15 lives per year and prevent as many as 1,125 injuries annually. The measure, signed into law in 2008, was named for a 2-year-old Long Island boy whose pediatrician father backed over him in their driveway in 2002.

Although Congress passed the measure with strong bipartisan backing, delays in researching and writing the rules pushed the federal mandate past a number of deadlines. Critics charged that the government was reluctant to put additional financial burdens on the auto industry already crippled by an economic downturn, even though some manufacturers had started to install rearview technologies like sensor systems.

In the United States, 44 percent of 2012 models came with rear cameras standard, and 27 percent had them as options, according to the automotive research firm Edmunds.

"This day has been a long time coming, and we urge automakers to move quickly to beat the 2018 deadline," said Ellen Bloom, senior director of federal policy at Consumers Union.

Deadline brings high interest for health insurance

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—A blizzard, jammed phone lines and unreliable websites failed to stop throngs of procrastinating Americans from trying to sign up for health coverage by the midnight Monday deadline for President Barack Obama's signature domestic policy initiative.

In Louisiana, wait times for callers lasted up to two hours. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee received nearly 1,900 calls by midday compared with about 800 the previous Monday. And in California, where enrollments surged toward the Obama administration's original projection of 1.3 million, the deadline day volume forced the state exchange to switch off a key function on its website and encourage people to finish their applications in the days ahead.

Across the nation, the interest in getting health insurance and avoiding a federal tax penalty was made clear in interviews with enrollment counselors and consumers.

"I have not had a physical in over 15 years," said Dionne Gilbert, a 51-year-old uninsured woman from Denver who waited in a 90-minute line to get enrollment assistance. "I told myself, `You need to do this. Your daughter loves you and needs you.'"

The last-minute rush was expected to significantly boost the number of Americans gaining coverage under the new law, and government officials told The Associated Press late Monday that they were on track to sign up more than 7 million Americans for health insurance by the deadline. But the months ahead will show whether the Affordable Care Act will meet its mandate to provide affordable health care coverage or whether high deductibles, paperwork snags and narrow physician networks make it a bust.

The administration has not said how many of those who already have signed up closed the deal by paying their first month's premiums. Also unknown is how many were previously uninsured—the real test of Obama's health care overhaul. In addition, the law expands coverage for low-income people through Medicaid, but only about half the states have agreed to implement that option.

In Washington, the law's supporters already have their sights on Version 2.0 - fixes for the next open enrollment season commencing Nov. 15.

STOCK PORTFOLIO

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW	S&P	NASDAQ
16,457.66	1,872.34	4,198.99
+134.60	+14.72	+43.24
0.82%	0.79%	1.04%

EXCHANGE RATES

In U.S. dollar terms

Australian Dollar	1.0786	Hong Kong Dollar	7.7589	Philippine Peso	44.809
British Pound	0.5999	Indian Rupee	55.2275	Singapore Dollar	1.2589
Canadian Dollar	1.1055	Indonesian Rupiah	59.9875	South Korean Won	1059.38
Chinese Yuan	6.2098	Japanese Yen	103.2657	Swiss Franc	0.8848
Euro	0.726	Malaysian Ringgit	3.261	Taiwan Dollar	30.38
		New Zealand Dollar	1.1512	Thailand Baht	32.3765

Nation

More mudslide victims found as state seeks new aid

AP

Workers and volunteers search for articles and belongings at the scene of the deadly March 22 mudslide, Monday, March 31, 2014, in Oso, Wash.

DARRINGTON, Wash. (AP)—Estimated financial losses from the deadly Washington mudslide that has killed at least 24 people have reached $10 million, Gov. Jay Inslee said Monday in a letter asking the federal government for a major disaster declaration.

In seeking additional federal help following one of the deadliest landslides in U.S. history, Inslee said about 30 families need assistance with housing, along with personal and household goods. The estimated losses include nearly $7 million in structures and more than $3 million in their contents, Inslee's letter said.

The Snohomish County medical examiner's office said Monday afternoon that it has received a total of 24 victims, and 18 of those have been positively identified. Previously, the official death toll was 21, with 15 victims identified.

The remains of three additional victims were found Monday, but they have not yet been included in the medical examiner's official numbers, Snohomish County Executive Director Gary Haakenson told reporters at a Monday evening briefing.

The county sheriff's office released a list Monday evening of 22 people believed missing following the March 22 slide that destroyed a rural mountainside community northeast of Seattle. That's down from the 30 people officials previously considered missing.

"There's been an exhaustive effort by the detectives to narrow the list down to one that they feel comfortable releasing," Haakenson said.

"These are 22 people whose loved ones are grieving," he said. "We want to do all we can to find them and put some closure in place for their families."

He said there could be some overlap between the list of missing and the handful of victims who have not been positively identified by the medical examiner.

Steve Harris, a division supervisor for the search effort, said Monday that search teams have been learning more about the force of the slide, helping them better locate victims in a debris field that is 70 feet deep in places.

"There's a tremendous amount of force and energy behind this," Harris said of the slide.

Harris said search dogs are the primary tool for finding victims, and searchers are finding human remains four to six times per day. Sometimes crews only find partial remains, which makes the identification process harder.

Bishops seek immigration reform during border trip

PHOENIX (AP)—Less than a week after President Barack Obama discussed immigration reform in a meeting with Pope Francis, a delegation of Roman Catholic leaders is visiting the U.S-Mexico border Tuesday to raise awareness about the plight of immigrants and to pray for policy changes.

Cardinal Sean O'Malley, one of Francis' key advisers and the leader of the Boston Archdiocese, will be joined by members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for an early morning walk in the desert along the border, followed by a Mass at the fence separating the two countries in southern Arizona.

"The purpose of this journey here to Arizona is to raise a consciousness about the need for our president and Congress to pass immigration policy and reform to address a broken system," said Bishop Gerald Kicanas of the Tucson Diocese. "We're also here to pray for those who have lost their lives along the border."

Dozens of immigrants die each year in the brutal desert terrain while trying to cross illegally into the United States along the roughly 2,000-mile-long border with Mexico. The Catholic leaders note that immigrants are simply trying to find better lives and jobs in America and that thousands of them have died crossing the Southwest desert in recent decades.

"What we fail to remember in this debate is the human aspect of immigration—that immigration is primarily about human beings, not economic or social issues," said Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Seattle and chairman of the conference's Committee on Migration. "Those who have died, and those deported each day, have the same value and innate God-given dignity as all persons, yet we ignore their suffering and their deaths."

The push for immigration reform in Congress has been stalled for months, with Democrats and Republicans unable to reach an agreement over the divisive issue.

House Democrats last week tried to force a vote on a comprehensive immigration bill, an effort that is likely to fail given Republican reluctance to address the topic in an election year while all signs point to major gains for the GOP in the November midterms.

The Senate passed a comprehensive bill last June, but the measure stalled in the GOP-controlled House where Republicans have argued for a piecemeal approach to reforming the system.

New report details racial gap among US children

NEW YORK (AP)—In every region of America, white and Asian children are far better positioned for success than black, Latino and American Indian children, according to a new report appealing for urgent action to bridge this racial gap.

Titled "Race for Results," the report is being released Tuesday by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which for decades has worked to improve child well-being in the United States.

The foundation also produces annual "Kids Count" reports, with reams of state-specific data, but these generally have not focused on race. The new report tackles the topic head-on, with charts and ratings that convey dramatic racial discrepancies.

At the core of the report is a newly devised index based on 12 indicators measuring a child's success from birth to adulthood. The indicators include reading and math proficiency, high school graduation data, teen birthrates, employment prospects, family income and education levels, and neighborhood poverty levels.

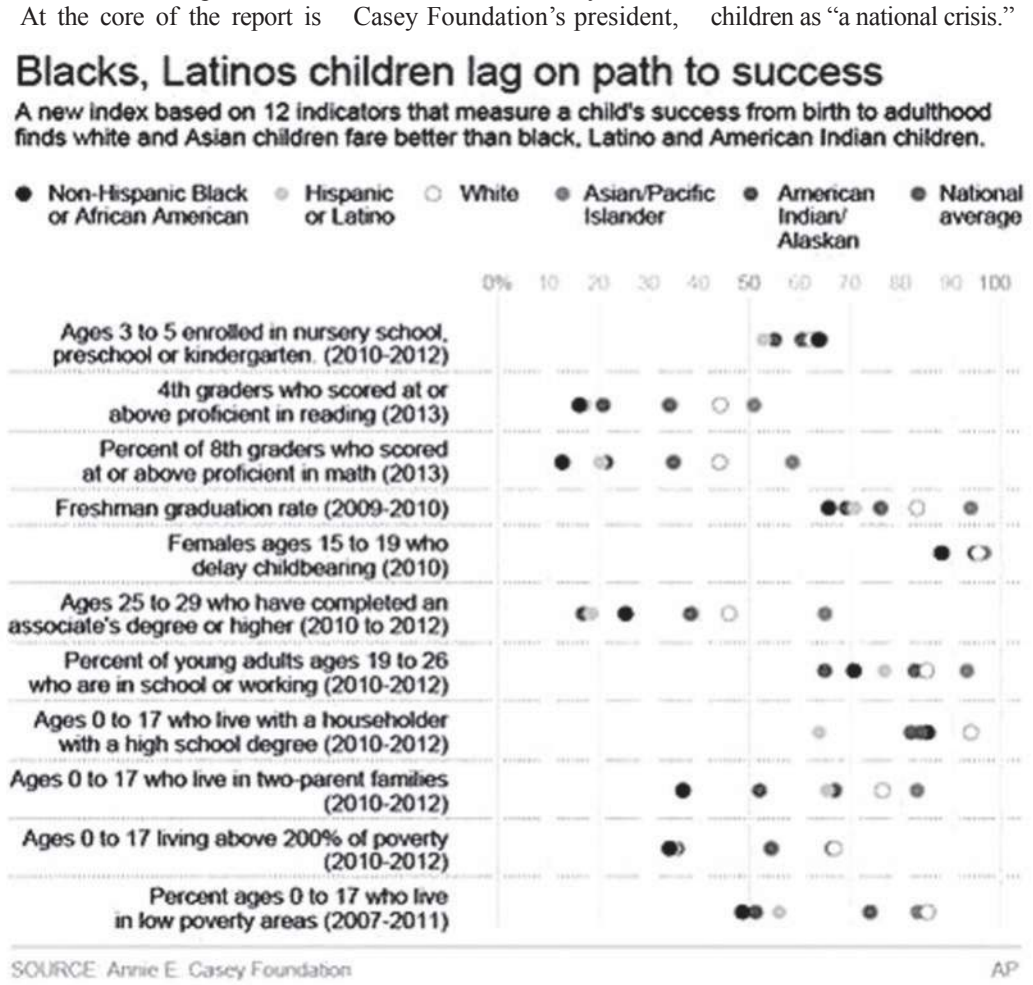
Using a single composite score with a scale of one to 1,000, Asian children have the highest index score at 776, followed by white children at 704.

"Scores for Latino (404), American-Indian (387) and African-American (345) children are distressingly lower, and this pattern holds true in nearly every state," said the report.

Patrick McCarthy, the Casey Foundation's president, said the findings are "a call to action that requires serious and sustained attention from the private, nonprofit, philanthropic and government sectors to create equitable opportunities for children of color."

The report was based on data from 2012, including census figures tallying the number of U.S. children under 18 at 39 million whites, 17.6 million Latinos, 10.2 million blacks, 3.4 million of Asian descent, and 640,000 American Indians, as well as about 2.8 million children of two or more races. Under census definitions, Latinos can be of various racial groups.

The report described the challenges facing African-American children as "a national crisis."


Blacks, Latinos children lag on path to success
A new index based on 12 indicators that measure a child's success from birth to adulthood finds white and Asian children fare better than black, Latino and American Indian children.
Non-Hispanic Black or African American
Hispanic or Latino
White
Asian/Pacific Islander
American Indian/ Alaskan
National average
0% 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Ages 3 to 5 enrolled in nursery school, preschool or kindergarten. (2010-2012)
4th graders who scored at or above proficient in reading (2013)
Percent of 8th graders who scored at or above proficient in math (2013)
Freshman graduation rate (2009-2010)
Females ages 15 to 19 who delay childbearing (2010)
Ages 25 to 29 who have completed an associate's degree or higher (2010 to 2012)
Percent of young adults ages 19 to 26 who are in school or working (2010-2012)
Ages 0 to 17 who live with a householder with a high school degree (2010-2012)
Ages 0 to 17 who live in two-parent families (2010-2012)
Ages 0 to 17 living above 200% of poverty (2010-2012)
Percent ages 0 to 17 who live in low poverty areas (2007-2011)
SOURCE: Annie E. Casey Foundation
AP

ACROSS THE NATION

Hagel acts to improve POW-MIA accounting effort

WASHINGTON (AP)—In a bid to improve the government's accounting for missing U.S. war dead, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said Monday he is establishing a new Pentagon agency with more focused authority and innovative approaches. "We're streamlining everything," Hagel told a news conference. The Pentagon has been under congressional pressure for months to take decisive action to improve the POW-MIA accounting effort. Its failings were highlighted last summer when The Associated Press disclosed an internal Pentagon report that said the search for remains of missing soldiers on foreign battlefields was mismanaged, wasteful and acutely dysfunctional.

Prosecutor: Woman stabbed beau 25 times with heel

HOUSTON (AP)—A Houston woman attacked her boyfriend in a fit of rage, sat on him after knocking him down and then stabbed him to death with the stiletto heel of her shoe, striking him at least 25 times in the face, a prosecutor told jurors Monday. Ana Trujillo's lawyer, though, said it was she who was attacked, and she defended herself from 59-year-old Alf Stefan Andersson using the only weapon she had available. Testimony began Monday in Trujillo's murder trial. Prosecutors say she killed Andersson, who was a University of Houston professor and researcher, during an argument at his condominium in June. She is free on a $100,000 bond.

Police: Man dead after shooting at Ga. university

COLUMBUS, Ga. (AP)—Police at Georgia's Columbus State University fatally shot a man over the weekend after officers responded to a report of someone with a gun, authorities said. A lawyer for the man's family said Monday that the man was unarmed and a visitor on campus. Zikarious Jaquan Flint, 20, died Sunday after receiving two gunshot wounds, Muscogee County Coroner Buddy Bryan said Monday. Flint wasn't a student at the university and no one else was hurt in the shooting Sunday afternoon at the campus, located about 100 miles southwest of Atlanta near the Alabama state line.

Asia

Koreas trade fire; island residents in shelters

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North and South Korea fired hundreds of artillery shells into each other's waters Monday in a flare-up of animosity that forced residents of five front-line South Korean islands to evacuate to shelters for several hours, South Korean officials said.

The exchange of fire into the Yellow Sea followed Pyongyang's sudden announcement that it would conduct live-fire drills in seven areas north of the Koreas' disputed maritime boundary. North Korea routinely test-fires artillery and missiles into the ocean but rarely discloses those plans in advance. The announcement was seen as an expression of Pyongyang's frustration at making little progress in its recent push to win outside aid.

North Korea fired 500 rounds of artillery shells over more than three hours, about 100 of which fell south of the sea boundary, South Korean Defense Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said. South Korea responded by firing 300 shells into North Korean waters, he said.

No shells from either side were fired at any land or military installations, but Kim called the North's artillery firing a provocation aimed at testing Seoul's security posture. There was no immediate comment from North Korea.

In Washington, White House spokesman Jonathan Lalley called North Korea's actions "dangerous and provocative" and said they would further aggravate tensions in the region.

AP

A South Korean marine aims his machine gun during the U.S.-South Korea joint landing exercises called Ssangyong, part of the Foal Eagle military exercises, in Pohang, South Korea, Monday, March 31, 2014.

Monday's exchange was relatively mild in the history of animosity and violence between the Koreas, but there is worry in Seoul that an increasingly dissatisfied North Korea could repeat the near-daily barrage of war rhetoric it carried out last spring, when tensions soared as Pyongyang threatened nuclear strikes on Washington and Seoul in response to condemnation of its third nuclear test.

Residents on front-line South Korean islands spent several hours in shelters during the firing, and officials temporarily halted ferry service linking the islands to the mainland. Kang Myeong-sung, speaking from a shelter on Yeonpyeong island, which is in sight of North Korean territory, said he didn't hear any fighter jets but heard the boom of artillery fire.

The poorly marked western sea boundary has been the scene of several bloody naval skirmishes between the Koreas in recent years. In March 2010, a South Korean warship sank in the area following a torpedo attack blamed on Pyongyang that left 46 sailors dead. North Korea denies responsibility for the sinking. In November 2010, a North Korean artillery bombardment killed four South Koreans on Yeonpyeong.

The North has gradually dialed down its threats since last year's tirade and has sought improved ties with South Korea in what foreign analysts say is an attempt to lure investment and aid. There has been no major breakthrough, however, with Washington and Seoul calling on the North to first take disarmament steps to prove its sincerity about improving ties.

Recent weeks have seen an increase in threatening rhetoric and a series of North Korean rocket and ballistic missile launches considered acts of protest by Pyongyang against annual ongoing springtime military exercises by Seoul and Washington. The North calls the South Korea-U.S. drills a rehearsal for invasion; the allies say they're routine and defensive.

"The boneheads appear to have completely forgotten the fact that Yeonpyeong island was smashed by our military's bolt of lightning a few years ago," a North Korean military official, Yun Jong Bum, said Monday, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency.

Australia to deploy flying air traffic controller

PERTH, Australia (AP)—Australia will deploy a modified Boeing 737 to act as a flying air traffic controller over the Indian Ocean to prevent a mid-air collision among the aircraft searching for the Malaysia Airlines jetliner that went missing over three weeks ago, an official said Tuesday.

An air force E-7A Wedgetail equipped with advanced radar will be deployed "in the near future" to monitor the increasingly crowded skies over the remote search zone, said Angus Houston, who heads the joint agency coordinating the multinational search effort.

The three-week hunt for Flight 370 has turned up no sign of the Boeing 777, which vanished March 8 with 239 people on board bound for Beijing from Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysia has been criticized for its handling of the search, particularly its communications to the media and families of the passengers. In something likely to fuel those concerns, the government changed its account of the final voice transmission from the cockpit.

In a statement late Monday, it said the final words received by ground controllers at 1:19 a.m. on March 8 were "Good night Malaysian three-seven-zero." Earlier the government said the final words were "All right, good night."

The statement didn't explain the discrepancy. The statement also said investigators were still trying to determine whether the pilot or co-pilot spoke the words.

At a news conference in Perth, Houston, the former Australian defense chief, called the search effort the most challenging one he has ever seen. The starting point for any search is the last known position of the vehicle or aircraft, he said.

"In this particular case, the last known position was a long, long way from where the aircraft appears to have gone," he said. "It's very complex, it's very demanding."

"What we really need now is to find debris, wreckage from the aircraft," he said. "This could drag on for a long time."

US seeking buyers for old military equipment

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—The United States is trying to sell or dispose of billions of dollars in military hardware, including sophisticated and highly specialized mine resistant vehicles as it packs up to leave Afghanistan after 13 years of war, officials said Monday.

But the efforts are complicated in a region where relations between neighboring countries are mired in suspicion and outright hostility.

A statement by the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan said Islamabad is interested in buying used U.S. equipment. The statement said Pakistan's request is being reviewed but any equipment it receives, including the coveted mine resistant vehicles, will not likely come from its often angry neighbor Afghanistan.

An earlier U.S. Forces statement was definite: Pakistan would not get any U.S. equipment being sold out of Afghanistan.

Mark Wright, Department of Defense spokesman, told The Associated Press in a telephone interview that the U.S. would like to sell to "nearby countries" the equipment that is too costly to ship back home.

Among the items for sale are 800 MRAPs, highly sophisticated Mine Resistant Ambush Protected armored vehicles. Selling them off could mean a savings of as much as $500 million and hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues, he said. The computerized MRAPs have been used by U.S. service personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan, as protection against the deadly roadside bombs used relentlessly by insurgents.

According to an Associated Press count at least 2,176 members of the U.S. military have died in Afghanistan since the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001. Many were killed by roadside bombs.

Still it seems certain that Afghanistan's nearest neighbor Pakistan won't be getting any of the excess 800 MRAPs that are up for sale by the departing U.S. military, although roadside bombs have been one of the deadliest weapons used by Pakistani insurgents against an estimated 170,000 Pakistani soldiers deployed in the tribal regions that border Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Japan lets first evacuees live in nuke no-go zone

TOKYO (AP)—For the first time since Japan's nuclear disaster three years ago, authorities are allowing residents to return to live in their homes within a tiny part of a 20-kilometer (12-mile) evacuation zone around the Fukushima plant.

The decision, which took effect Tuesday, applies to 357 people in 117 households from a corner of Tamura city after the government determined that radiation levels are low enough for habitation.

But many of those evacuees are still undecided about going back because of fears about radiation, especially its effect on children.

More than 100,000 people were displaced by the March 11, 2011, nuclear disaster, when a huge earthquake and ensuing tsunami led to meltdowns at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant. Many of them are still living in temporary housing or with relatives, and some have moved away to start life over elsewhere.

Areas within the evacuation zone have become ghost towns, overgrown with weeds.

Visits inside the zone had previously been allowed, and about 90 people already live in the area with special permission, according to Tamura city hall.

New stores and public schools are planned to accommodate those who move back.

"People want to go back and lead proper lives, a kind of life where they can feel their feet are on the ground," said Yutaro Aoki, a Tamura resident who works for a nonprofit organization overseeing the city's recovery.

Much of Tamura lies outside the evacuation zone. The city has a population of 38,000, including evacuees living in temporary housing.

Evacuees now receive government compensation of about 100,000 yen ($1,000) each a month. Those who move back get a one-time 900,000 yen ($9,000) as an incentive. The monthly compensation will end within a year for residents from areas where the government decides it is safe enough to go back and live.

The radioactive plume from the Fukushima plant did not spread evenly in a circle and so some areas outside the 20-kilometer zone are still too unsafe to live. Decontamination on an unprecedented scale is ongoing in Fukushima. Some places may not be safe to live for decades.

World

Russia pulls back a battalion from Ukraine border

SIMFEROPOL, Crimea (AP)—Russia said Monday it was pulling a battalion of several hundred troops away from the Ukrainian border but kept tens of thousands in place, prompting a worried response from the Kiev government about what the U.S. warned was still a "tremendous buildup."

Russia moved quickly to strengthen its economic hold on Crimea, with Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev arriving in the newly annexed peninsula with promises of funds for improved power supplies, water lines, education and pensions for the elderly.

Russia's takeover of the strategic Black Sea region, its troop buildup near Ukraine's border and its attempts to compel constitutional changes in Ukraine have markedly raised tensions with the West and prompted fears that Moscow intends to invade other areas of its neighbor.

AP

Russian head of Transport Department of the Ministry of Defense Colonel General Igor Lyapin smiles as Russian tanks T-72B, close left, arrive and Ukrainian tanks T-62, center back, are transported to the Ukraine at the Ostryakovo railway station not far from Simferopol, Crimea, Monday, March 31, 2014.

However, Russian President Vladimir Putin told German Chancellor Angela Merkel in a phone call Monday that some troops were being withdrawn from the Ukraine border, Merkel's office said. The withdrawal involved a battalion of about 500 troops, Russian news reports said.

The U.S. reacted cautiously to the Russian troop movement, with Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel saying that "tens of thousands" of Russian forces still remained along the Ukrainian border, a situation he called "a tremendous buildup."

The new government in Ukraine said the action only increased its uneasiness about Russia's intentions.

"We have information that Russia is carrying out incomprehensible maneuvers on the border with Ukraine," Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesman Yevgen Perebyinis said. "Troops in some places are moving backward, some of them are moving forward. Which is why, obviously, we are worried by these movements of armed forces. We have no clear explanation from the Russian side about the aim of these movements."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry also discussed Ukraine by phone Monday, a day after holding talks in Paris, the Russian foreign ministry said.

A senior U.S. official said Lavrov had promised Kerry that a division of Russian troops would be pulled back; a division generally consists of thousands of troops.

"Now there have been reports of possible drawdowns of Russian military forces from the border. We haven't seen that yet, but if they turn out to be accurate, that would be a good thing," White House spokesman Jay Carney said.

WORLD BRIEFS

Israel minister: Pollard opposes release for talks

JERUSALEM (AP)—A hard-line Israeli Cabinet minister says convicted spy Jonathan Pollard opposes being freed from a U.S. jail in exchange for Palestinians prisoners. Uri Ariel says people close to Pollard have told him that he opposes such a "shameful deal." Ariel, from the hard-line Jewish Home party, spoke to Army Radio on Tuesday. He says he, too, is against the release of "murderers" for Pollard. Talk of the possibility of Pollard's early release has arisen as an incentive in the troubled Mideast peace negotiations. The idea is that if he is freed, Israel would make concessions and release more Palestinian prisoners.

Ukrainian radicals end standoff with police

KIEV, Ukraine (AP)—Ukraine's interior minister says that members of a radical nationalist group have surrendered their weapons and left a downtown hotel. Arsen Avakov wrote on his Facebook Tuesday that members of Right Sector left the Dnipro Hotel they had commandeered as their headquarters, got into buses and headed to a suburban camp. Their departure followed a shooting spree in the capital, in which a Right Sector member shot and wounded three people, including a deputy mayor of the capital. Police then surrounded the hotel. Right Sector played a key role in the ouster of Ukraine's pro-Russia President Viktor Yanukovych, but fell out with the new government and besieged parliament for a several hours demanding Avakov's resignation following the killing of one of their leaders.

Iraqi army battles militants in deadly Anbar siege

RAMADI, Iraq (AP)—An Iraqi special forces patrol moves on foot past ruined homes on the outskirts of Ramadi, a city west of Baghdad where al-Qaida-inspired militants have held off the military for three months. As they head down an alleyway, shots from snipers ring out, followed by grenade blasts.

The troops take shelter behind walls and Humvees and return fire. No one is wounded and the operation continues.

A short while later the unit is clearing a house. They blow open the outer gate with a charge and a bomb expert goes inside. He pronounces the building safe to enter and calls on the rest of the soldiers to search it. Moments later a huge explosion collapses the building, shakes the ground and sends dust billowing in the air.

The house was booby-trapped. Four soldiers are killed and 10 are wounded.

"God curse Daesh," one junior officer swore, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, the al-Qaida spin-off group leading the militants. Soldiers nearby said they could hear the militants taunting them through loudspeakers: "Our slain are in Heaven, while your slain are in Hell."

This grueling urban warfare in the Ramadi suburb of al-Bakir, witnessed by an Associated Press reporter on Thursday, is part of a deadly standoff pitting government forces and allied tribal militias against the Islamic State and allied militants in Anbar province, the heartland of Iraq's Sunni minority. The militants hold part of the provincial capital of Ramadi and nearly all of the nearby city of Fallujah.

It's the biggest challenge yet to the Shiite-led government of Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki and has dragged on far longer than officials had expected, costing the lives of scores of Iraqi soldiers. It is likely to disrupt voting in elections scheduled for the end of April, shaking the credibility of the government.

Anbar operations commander Lt. Gen. Rasheed Fleih says U.S.-trained special forces are taking the lead in fighting since the regular Iraqi army lacks experience for this kind of warfare. He says more than 100 Iraqi soldiers have been killed and 400 wounded in three months of fighting, while about 250 militants have been killed.

He estimates the number of militants at around 1,000 fighters in Fallujah alone, half of them foreigners.

The government says it is making progress in the battle. The al-Bakir operation was intended to clear our insurgents from this middle-class suburb and re-establish government control.

But Lt. Gen. Ali Ghaidan, commander of the army's ground forces, says that Iraqi military commanders did not expect that the fight against armed groups in Anbar would take such a long time.

Venezuela issues ID cards to curtail food hoarding

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)—Battling food shortages, the government is rolling out a new ID system that is either a grocery loyalty card with extra muscle or the most dramatic step yet toward rationing in Venezuela, depending on who is describing it.

President Nicolas Maduro's administration says the cards to track families' purchases will foil people who stock up on groceries at subsidized prices and then illegally resell them for several times the amount. Critics say it's another sign the oil-rich Venezuelan economy is headed toward Cuba-style dysfunction.

Registration begins at more than 100 government-run supermarkets across the country Tuesday, and working-class shoppers who sometimes endure hours-long lines at government-run stores to buy groceries at steeply reduced prices are welcoming the plan.

"The rich people have things all hoarded away, and they pull the strings," said Juan Rodriguez, who waited two hours to enter the government-run Abastos Bicentenario supermarket near downtown Caracas on Monday, and then waited another three hours to check out.

Rigid currency controls and a shortage of U.S. dollars make it increasingly difficult for Venezuelans to find imported basic products like milk, flour, toilet paper and cooking oil. Price controls don't help either, with producers complaining that some goods are priced too low to make a profit and justify production.

As of January, more than a quarter of basic staples were out of stock in Venezuelan stores, according to the central bank's scarcity index. The shortages are among the problems cited by Maduro's opponents who have been staging protests since mid-February.

Checkout workers at Abastos Bicentenario were taking down customers' cellphone numbers Monday, to ensure they couldn't return for eight days. Shoppers said employees also banned purchases by minors, to stop parents from using their children to engage in hoarding, which the government calls "nervous buying."

Rodriguez supports both measures.

"People who go shopping every day hurt us all," he said, drawing approving nods from the friends he made over the course of his afternoon slowly snaking through the aisles with his oversized cart.

Reflecting Maduro's increasingly militarized discourse against opponents he accuses of waging "economic war," the government is calling the new program the "system of secure supply."

Patrons will register with their fingerprints, and the new ID card will be linked to a computer system that monitors purchases. Food Minister Felix Osorio says it will sound an alarm when it detects suspicious purchasing patterns, barring people from buying the same goods every day. But he also says the cards will be voluntary, with incentives like discounts and entry into raffles for homes and cars.

Focus

Old US ship home to Filipinos in China standoff

By JIM GOMEZ
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ABOARD BRP SIERRA MADRE, Spratly Islands (AP)—On board the crumbling carcass of this World War II-era warship, Filipino marine 1st Lt. Mike Pelotera and his eight men make their way to a mid-level deck to raise the Philippine flag up a leaning pole and then salute it. Across the calm, turquoise waters, two Chinese coast guard ships lurk, looking on.

Its hull riddled with holes and rust, the BRP *Sierra Madre* has become a fragile symbol of the Philippines' claim to Second Thomas Shoal, an eight-kilometer (five-mile) -long submerged coral outcrop that has been disputed by China and the Philippines for years.

It's a lonely ship, where Pelotera and his team wage a daily battle against isolation.

"There's a point where you tend to feel low," Pelotera said of the challenges of his team's four-month deployment at the reef, where there is no land to stand on and nothing to stare at all day but sea. "But we have to kill the boredom because there is an important mission to fulfill."

The Philippine navy inherited the former U.S. tank-landing ship USS *Harnett County* in 1976, and ran it deliberately aground at Second Thomas Shoal in 1999.

A Chinese frigate and maritime surveillance ships arrived last year to press China's claim to the shoal, which is believed to be sitting atop undersea oil and gas reserves. The move was an example of China's increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea, something that is alarming the United States, Manila's longtime ally.

Analysts say China's strategy is to slowly take possession of islands and outcrops in the South China Sea, using intimidation where necessary but avoiding any major confrontation. Its military might and economic dominance in the region mean it can push its weight around with little fear.

Second Thomas Shoal and the nearby Spratly Islands lie about 120 miles (190 kilometers) from the western Philippine province of Palawan, and about 700 miles (more than 1,000 kilometers) from southern China. China's foreign ministry says Beijing has "indisputable sovereignty" over the shoal.

The *Sierra Madre* is now effectively a shipwreck, but the Philippine military has not decommissioned it. This makes the ship an extension of the government and means any attack on the ship is tantamount to an assault against the Philippines. The Chinese ships are around 5 miles (8 kilometers) from the outpost, clearly visible to those on board.

When Associated Press journalists and other members of the media were allowed to board the ship over the weekend, the marines went about their day, washing dishes and giving the visitors a short tour. The slow strain of Kid Rock's late 1990's song "Only God Knows" played from an old stereo set.

AP

Philippine Marines deployed on the Philippine Navy ship LT 57 *Sierra Madre* lift sacks of provisions after the Philippine Government vessel AM700 successfully docked beside it off Second Thomas Shoal, locally known as Ayungin Shoal, Saturday, March 29, 2014 off South China Sea on the West Philippine Sea.

AP

A Philippine Marine aboard the Philippine Government vessel AM700 throws the line as it docks beside the Philippine Navy ship LT 57 *Sierra Madre* off Second Thomas Shoal, locally known as Ayungin Shoal, Saturday, March 29, 2014 off South China Sea on the West Philippine Sea.

"We're marines," Pelotera said in an interview. "We can adapt to life anywhere."

Another marine, Cpl. Sheffrey Luna, said people should look beyond the ship's disrepair.

"They should see the determination of the soldiers in it," he said. "If you're not determined here, where everything you see is water, you won't last long."

In the last 15 years, the *Sierra Madre* has slowly crumbled, beaten by the sun, sea and storms.

Its main deck, used as a helipad before, is now home to an upturned lifeboat and toppled iron poles. Doors and wooden scraps cover holes and weak deck sections that could collapse and hurl a marine down into the cavernous cargo hold. Its towering mast is heavily rusted and could be toppled by the next big storm.

Three weeks ago, the Chinese succeeded in blocking for the first time a Philippine boat bringing troops and supplies to the *Sierra Madre*.

Manila deployed a civilian boat last week with a fresh batch of marines and 10 tons of food. In a bid to draw global attention to what Philippine officials have called China's bullying tactics, they invited more than a dozen journalists, TV cameramen and photographers to come along on the 30-hour-plus journey from the Philippine mainland.

Two Chinese coast guard ships tried to block the slow-moving vessel, with one cutting dangerously through the Philippine boat's path twice. The Chinese coast guard warned the boat by radio to turn back, saying it was illegally venturing into Chinese territory. The Chinese ships blew their horns continuously, but the boat maneuvered toward a shallow approach to the shoal dotted with submerged rocky outcrops, preventing the Chinese from continuing.

Carl Thayer, a professor at the University of New South Wales and an expert on the dispute, said China is trying to wear the Philippines down. "China is mainly motivated to squelch the Philippines and its vocal and legal opposition to Chinese assertiveness, lest this inspire other regional states to do the same," Thayer said. "Bit by bit, China hopes to condition regional states into accepting its hegemony."

Philippine navy Lt. Ferdinand Gato, who led the resupply mission, smiled as the boat approached the *Sierra Madre*, with the outgoing marines, some of them sporting beards, waving and smiling on the deck. He had served as a gunnery officer of the warship during military campaigns against Muslim insurgents and Abu Sayyaf extremists in the mid-1990s.

A regional military commander, Lt. Gen. Roy Deveraturda, awarded Pelotera and his men with bronze cross medals Monday for their work on the *Sierra Madre*.

"You can now shave and have a haircut," he told the marines.

He said he was heartened when he asked each of them if they were willing to return to the Philippine ship on the shoal. "They told me, `anytime, sir.'"

Campus Life

GMS students earn plaudits at PGFC competition

Congratulations to Green Meadow School students for their excellent performance at the Primary Grades Forensic Conference held on Jan. 10, 2014, at Oleai Elementary School. Keep up the good work, Falcons!

K2 DIVISION

Dramatic Interpretation:
1st Place: Bernice Shane Sabino
3rd Place: Ariel Legaspi
4th Place: Liana Daca
5th Place: Andrielle Coloma

Impromptu A:
5th Place: Bernice Shane Sabino

Impromptu B:
2nd place: Jeremiah Alfred
5th Place: Arro Hunter

DUO A:
1st Place: Kriselle Drilon & Nicole Sacramento
2nd Place: Areeza Anda & Ariel Legaspi

Choral Speaking A:
2nd Place: Jeremiah Alfred, Arnel Josh Coloma, Patrick Gregorio, John Paul Salamat and Elijah Umali

3-5 DIVISION

Dramatic Interpretation:
4th Place: Jill Anne Mallari

Humorous Interpretation:
3rd Place: Jill Anne Mallari

DUO A:
5th Place: Aljanah Manabat and Angeline Norcio

Reader's Forum MC:
2nd Place: Rownel Jody Coloma

Choral Speaking A:
1st Place: Kezia Arugay, Faith Cacdac, Cloe Lagmay, Jazmyn Lopez, and Leuncy Regalado
4th Place: Aljanah Manabat, Angeline Norcio, Erin Ferrer, Rayven Daca, and Rownel Jody Coloma

Green Meadow School president Mila Merjilla joins the winning students from GMS at the recent PGFC competition.

GMS PHOTO

GMS students do well at NJFL contest

Proud parents, administration and staff of Green Meadow School congratulate their students for performing well at the Feb. 22, 2014, National Junior Forensic League competition held at Marianas High School. Recognition and gratitude are also due parents and friends for their support and encouragement given to GMS competing students. Thanks also to coach Lorelisa Espiritu for her dedication and sincere efforts in preparing the students for the competition. Congratulations Falcons!

2nd Place: Ian Willard Ranin, Poetry Masters C

3rd Place: Robin Agbayani, Poetry Masters B

4th Place: Natalie Jane Jirshbein, Poetry Masters D

5th Place: Rbjacob Malonzo & Ian Willard Ranin, DUO B

5th Place: Art Vincent Alfeche, Impromptu B

5th Place: Isaiah Miguel Mallari, Humorous Interpretation A

Green Meadow School's National Junior Forensic League coach Liz Espiritu joins school president Mila Merjilla and the winning students from GMS at the recent NJFL competition.

GMS PHOTO

...and Math Court tilt

The management and staff of Green Meadow School congratulate their students for excellent accomplishments at Math Court competition held on March 1, 2014, at WSR Elementary School. Our sincere appreciation goes also to parents for supporting the contestants and to Rommel Buenablor, Rosebeth Gregorio, Lizette Pascua, and Celan Navarro for serving as proctors. Thanks for another job well done to Green Meadow School Math Court coaches Sony Natividad and Ana Liza Quiambao.

KINDER 5
1st Place: Zaira Angela Llaga
2nd Place: Erick Ferrer
2nd Place: Gwen Denise Lagmay
2nd Place: Oscar Bien Buenaflor
2nd Place: Beatrice Ryza Fabre
2nd Place: Ezra Alfred

FIRST GRADE
1st Place: Chealzka Navarro
1st Place: Nichole Llaga
2nd Place: Arro Hunter
3rd Place : Keith Dianne Ebuen

SECOND GRADE
2nd Place: Patrick Gregorio
4th Place: Jeremiah Alfred

THIRD GRADE
2nd Place: Angelene Faith Cacdac
3rd Place: Lyndon Digno
3rd Place: Leunyce Regalado

FOURTH GRADE
3rd Place: Angeline Norcio

FIFTH GRADE
3rd Place: Mikee Mame Mendoza
5th Place: Xavier Gatmaitan

Green Meadow School congratulate their students for excellent accomplishments at Math Court competition held on March 1, 2014, at WSR Elementary School.

GMS PHOTO

MBA students win top spots at 2014 STEM Fair

Marianas Baptist Academy congratulates its students who won at the Islandwide STEM Fair on March 15, 2014, at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Sonia Ji Yoon Kim won first place in Biology and was one of those in the overall top 15.

Angel Sean Legaspi, 8th grade, won second place in Behavioral Science.

Gary Antonio Camacho, 7th grade, won second place in Technology.

Won Jun Kim, 9th grade, won second place in Math.

Emily An, 10th grade, won second place in Earth & Space

Cheny Rhyoo, 10th grade, won second place in Technology.

Michael Cataluna, 12th grade, won third place in Health. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The winners of Marianas Baptist Academy are joined by their coach and Science teacher, Eleonor Alejo, right. Not in picture is another coach and Physics teacher Tony Flores.

Philly schools consider universal enrollment model

PHILADELPHIA (AP)— When it's time to enroll in school in Philadelphia, students face a bewildering array of choices: Neighborhood public school? Cyber school? Charter? Private or religious school? What about a specialty district school focused on science? Performing arts? International affairs?

Then, applying for admission can entail reams of red tape. Forms, requirements and due dates vary depending on the number and kinds of schools involved.

District officials are now wondering if universal enrollment can simplify things. The increasingly popular but contentious model would offer families a central online gateway to research their options and submit one application with ranked preferences, regardless of school type.

Opponents say the system actually reduces choice because a computer algorithm generates a single match for students. But supporters contend it can streamline planning for districts and level the playing field for residents without the means to master the hodgepodge registration process.

"There's many different deadlines, many different applications, and it really privileges the parents who have the time resources and connections to make that work," said Lori Shorr, the city's chief education officer.

Rolled out over the past few weeks in Washington, D.C., and Newark, N.J., universal enrollment has also been adopted in cities including Denver and New Orleans. But the concept has met a lot of resistance in Philadelphia, one of the nation's largest districts.

Opposition stems partly from a proposal that enrollment would be managed by a private education reform group. Critics wonder about possible bias favoring charter schools, which are publicly financed but operate independently; they also object to giving students' personal data to a third party. In other cities, education officials run the system.

GOOD JOB! CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Congratulations to the Manta Ray Battalion JROTC Leadership and Academic Bowl Leadership Team for advancing to the third phase of the nationwide online competition! The competition tests the cadets' knowledge of the lessons taught in JROTC as well as iconic heroes such as Gen. George Marshall and Gen. Douglas MacArthur. The team started the competition in October 2013 with the first phase, advancing to the second phase in February 2014, and is now advancing to the final level. The cadets in the picture are C/1SG Sergio Mendiola, C/MAJ Joann Bandales (Captain), C/2LT Jhean Lamberto, C/CPT Hanzel Batan, C/CPT Ella Mae Dela Cruz, C/CPT Annika Matias (Co-Captain), C/CPT Condrad Calub, and the Senior Army Instructor, CSM Richard S. Basa.

FIRST YEAR DEATH ANNIVERSARY

In Loving Memory of

†Jose Miyasaki Babauta

We, the family would like to invite all our families, relatives and friends to join us in prayers as we commemorate the 1st year death anniversary of the passage of our beloved unto eternal life.

Mass of intention will be offered daily at 6:00a.m. at Kristo Rai Church beginning on Thursday, April 03, 2014 through Friday, April 11, 2014.

On the final day, Friday, April 11, 2014 breakfast will be served at the Kristo Rai Church Social Hall immediately thereafter.

Your prayers, thoughts and presence are sincerely appreciated.

Thank you, Un Dangkulu na Si Yu'us Ma'ase

THE FAMILY

Life & Style

A monthlong celebration of poetry

April is National Poetry Month, a monthlong, national celebration of poetry established by the Academy of American Poets as a way to increase awareness and appreciation of poetry in the United States. To mark the occasion, Tinian English teacher Joseph Connolly submitted the following poems for publication:

Boomer Sonnets: An introduction

By JOSEPH CONNOLY
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

BABY BOOMERS-ANOTHER DAY IN THE LIFE

We all grow older daily with every breath
filling casinos, buffets, hospitals, and spas
dealing with aging and inevitable death
replacement knees, hips, 'push em up' girdles and bras

Spending millions on balding and dyeing gray hair
falling arches, sagging guts, butts, shots of botox
waking up each morning with new pains everywhere
specialists give us bad news and a price that shocks

Pricing new models of an electric wheel chair
trying new fad diets and old vitamin spin
ignoring our flab and farting everywhere
rationalizing the fattening food we eat is no sin

Hoping, praying to cure our cancer and tumors
another day in the life of Baby Boomers

BOOMER SONNETS - THE 'C' LIST

Copping out, coming out, cleaning out the neural cobwebs comes first
when the Boomer 'C' list comes along the old glass ceiling path
champagne, cocaine, chilblain, children who complain of fiscal thirst
in the background, behind these is " The Big C "(Cancer)—you do the math

Chief among killers and disease ridden Boomers today is "The Big C"
from head to toe Boomers know someone, if not themselves, with cancer
cures for many types seems evasive, and perhaps in some cases not to be
scientists young and old, in labs, in heat and in cold, search for an answer

More pleasant C's can be found in cookies, cupcakes, assorted ice creameries
cabbage, coleslaws, corned beef, croissants, cous cous, chicken chow mein
celebrated chefs, and us common folk fix food at home for Boomer's dreameries
laying low now on the fancy chow and stressing the beauty of vegetables plain

So chill Boomers chill, give those crippled fingers a massage for a crutch
buy a 'green' tech Boomer car, lower your carbon footprint, and use no clutch

BOOMER SONNETS - THE 'D' LIST

DUH! don't dare to say you don't know what's on top the 'D' list
it has to be DYING or trying to avoid it, businesses exploit it daily
the inevitable event Boomers wish they could somehow miss
so pharmacies parade pills with a charade and the pills sell gaily

Death at an early age? Oh missed it? Now it comes without trying
comes creeping up when you fall down, pay those insurance bills
waking up everyday with a headache that won't go away, crying
just thinking about what you have now and about all your future ills

Lay down your weary dreams and wake to a new and delightfil age
dig in, dig out, dance a duet, doo wop, drag more and more out
don't let the 'D' list drag you down into Death Valley without some rage
get up and boogie down the desert strip with plenty of 'Twist and Shout'

Delighted now to find, now knowing better than to accept a death dirge
don't delay joys, make some noise Boomers ! whenever you get the urge

The vagaries of education philosophies

By JOSEPH CONNOLY
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

After over a quarter century teaching in the CNMI, before that in a hospital in New Orleans, and up in S.E. Alaska's Panhandle, I have seen many educational philosophies and movements come and go. Here is a triad of sonnets that address in a slightly humorous and somewhat skeptical manner some of those various directions education has taken. Enjoy!

MOVEMENTS - common, core, life, and more...

Well friends, some movements are thought to be fair
then there will be those believed to be fouls
some movements are so small we don't even care
necessary movements come from our bowels
there are folks who join every single one
there are those that have absolutely no choice
serious movements may precede some quite fun
hearing musical movements make us rejoice
through our lives we move from stage to stage
at home, at work, at school, from room to room
not enjoying change sends some into a rage
while others wear masks of impending doom
best roll with the punches, go along with the flow
learn from each movement, you'll be in the know

CONNECT the DOTS and COLOR MY BRAINBOWS

So what color is inside your brain?
what color is in hers, his, or mine?
Emergenetics tries hard to explain
giving brains some colors to define
so if you think socially with your head
you're in a brain state colored red
if conceptual thought gives pause to mellow
you're in a brain state painted yellow
when your analytical brain thinks through and through
say, "hey other analysts, paint me blue too"
if a practical thinker, you practically know what I mean
broccoli, lettuce, politically in? - correct, you are green
if this new stuff gives your brain more puckers
"Keep on truckin"…there are plenty more suckers

IN BLOOM'S ROOM

For a blueprint of taxonomy by Benjamin Bloom
take a short walk through his theoretical room
in the beginning there was KNOWLEDGE
we must not forget to mention
it helped us find our way through college
talk specifics and grasp COMPREHENSION
once we've assessed the learning situation
looking at the difference between that and this
then we can start to use APPLICATION
and break it down to actual ANALYSIS
using synergistic solutions for our SYNTHESIS
learning comes through in waves of bliss
we're alive and well in the realm of education
perhaps without fear of EVALUATION

Waxing poetic on Ukraine and Crimea

By JOSEPH CONNOLY
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Here are four classic types of poetry that I have used to deal with international headline news. Haiku, a Japanese form, is traditionally written about nature. When it is written about human matters it is called senryu. Limericks, of Irish origin, are usually funny. The 14-line sonnet as used here was usually written about love and or death. The form is called a Shakespearean or an Elizabethan sonnet. Queen Elizabeth I ruled England during a time when they flourished. Shakespeare mastered and wrote more than 150 love sonnets and his are considered to be the best of all time. The villanelle is a 16th century French style with a strict rhyme and line structure. These poems have been written over the past month as the crisis in Ukraine and the Crimean peninsula has unfolded. Please enjoy these and other poems during National Poetry Month.

HAIKU for UKRAINE and CRIMEA

Ukrainian cold spring
raining down in Crimea
Europe twitches

been through this before
mother bear shuts the door
after Tatars home at last

a river of realistic tears
folks going ballistic with ethnic fears
Crimean linguistics

A LIMERICK for the UKRAINE

ex KGB boss Comrade Vladimir Putin
has a mouth he seldom puts his foot in
he moved on the Crimea quite quickly
now the Ukraine is feeling quite sickly
so far at least there has been little shootin

A SONNET for SEBASTABOL and CRIMEA

Thousands of protestors rally out in the spring rain
Massed in a large city square call out for democracy
In Kiev, the capitol of the Ukraine, they all long
To join the European Union and be more free
Their motives—economic mobility—quite noble
after months of protest they get rid of a corrupt boss
unaware of coming events in the port of Sebastobol
when the whole Crimean peninsula would become a loss
Putin felt oustering the boss made push come to shove
he took a checkmate move from his KGB master book
and slipped a classic Communist iron fist into a glove
Annexing the entire Crimea was the chess move he took
Now Russian troops mass on Ukraine's eastern border
As Putin puts his paratrooper knights and pawns in order

SISTER COUNTRY IN CRISIS - Spring 2014

- a villanelle for the Ukraine & Crimea

a sister country in crisis
big brother bear gives it a shove
using military vices
borders cut up into slices
from the cold east and from above
a sister country in crisis
big bear heeds its own advices
little bear squeezed by iron glove
has no nuclear devices
Tatars rank lower on indices
now back in the country they love
a sister country in crisis
Putin plays chess, cool cat and mices
carefully plotting every move
using military vices
eagle opens its orifice
and offers up a peaceful dove
neighboring countries feel crisis
money lost in trade crevices

Engaged Johnny Depp shows off 'chick's ring'

BEIJING (AP)—Johnny Depp showed off a diamond engagement ring that he called a "chick's ring" on Monday—indirectly confirming rumors of his engagement to actress Amber Heard.

Asked whether he was engaged, the "Pirates of the Caribbean" star told The Associated Press: "The fact that I'm wearing a chick's ring on my finger is probably a dead giveaway. Not very subtle." He laughed as he lifted up his left hand and displayed a single diamond on a band around his ring finger.

His comments follow months of unconfirmed reports of his engagement to actress Heard, 27, who starred alongside Kevin Costner in "3 Days to Kill" released in the U.S. earlier this year.

Depp and Heard starred together in "The Rum Diary," filmed in Puerto Rico in 2009.

In 2012, Depp split with his partner of 14 years, French model-singer Vanessa Paradis. They have two children.

In a trademark off-the-wall comment, Depp said: "I think that I would be better at making women's shoes than I would be at wedding planning, I can't plan anything. I'm really bad at that stuff."

The 50-year-old actor was in Beijing to promote his new movie "Transcendence." Depp plays a terminally ill scientist who downloads his mind into a computer in the sci-fi drama that asks: What if we could upload a human mind into a computer? It also stars Rebecca Hall as Depp's wife and Morgan Freeman.

"The technology that exists within the film, what I find most fascinating is that a lot of it exists already and by all accounts from scholars and professors and scientists that species of technology is not far away, that kind of artificial intelligence," said Depp in an interview.

"It's one of those films that one person is forced to make a choice in an instant, when your loved one is dying and you have a split-second decision if you have the ability to upload their consciousness into a computer, would you do that? It's quite a strange decision to make but for love I think we would all do it."

"Transcendence" comes out in China on April 18—the same day as the U.S. release. China is the only country currently where "Transcendence" will be showing in 3-D—a format popular with Chinese audiences.

China is also the only international stop Depp is making as part of the movie's promotion tour, illustrating the growing attention Hollywood is paying to the country that now has the world's second-biggest box office after the United States.

AP

Actor Johnny Depp, with a diamond ring on his left hand, attends a promotional event for his new movie "Transcendence" in Beijing, China, Monday, March 31, 2014.

Pharrell Williams named as coach on 'The Voice'

NEW YORK (AP)—NBC has signed singer-songwriter Pharrell Williams as a coach for the upcoming seventh season of its musical competition series "The Voice."

Williams scored an Oscar nomination this year for his song "Happy" from the film "Despicable Me 2." He also had a Grammy-winning collaboration with Daft Punk on the dance hit "Get Lucky."

Williams

He was an adviser to team Usher on season four of "The Voice," and performed the song "Blurred Lines" with Robin Thicke on the show last May.

NBC said it would announce the remainder of the coaching line-up at a later date.

Actress Sara Gilbert and musician Linda Perry wed

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Sara Gilbert and Linda Perry are married.

A spokeswoman for Gilbert says the actress wed the musician over the weekend. The spokeswoman, Melissa Kates, confirmed the nuptials Monday.

Gilbert is best known for her starring role on the long-running sitcom "Roseanne." She is also a creator and co-host of the CBS show "The Talk."

Fellow hosts Julie Chen and Aisha Tyler said Monday that they attended the ocean-front wedding. They say it was "beautiful" and "magical."

Perry is a singer, songwriter, producer and former front woman of the rock band 4 Non Blondes.

The 39-year-old Gilbert and 48-year-old Perry have been engaged since April 2013.

AP

In this Feb. 9, 2013 file photo, actress Sara Gilbert, left, and recording artist Linda Perry arrive at the Clive Davis Pre-GRAMMY Gala in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Nicole Richie bringing popular Web series to VH1

NEW YORK (AP)—Nicole Richie's Twitter feed has launched her return to television.

The 32-year-old former reality TV star-turned-designer, who is also an author and actress, is heading to VH1.

#CandidlyNicole is based on her popular AOL Web series, which was adapted from her Twitter feed, made up of her musings about everything from parenting to pop culture to random observations.

Richie

The VH1 version will feature all new content in eight half-hour episodes premiering July 17.

In an interview last year with The Associated Press, Richie said she was interested in eventually bringing the series to television but viewed an online start as "a nice way to experiment."

Richie starred in the TV series "The Simple Life" with Paris Hilton and was a mentor on NBC's "Fashion Star."

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Springsteen among those to fete Rock Hall class

NEW YORK (AP)—Bruce Springsteen, Stevie Nicks, Carrie Underwood, Chris Martin: The stars are turning out to salute the 2014 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees. The hall of fame announced Tuesday that "The Boss" will fittingly induct and perform with his loyal E Street Band, while a superstar lineup of Nicks, Underwood, Bonnie Raitt, Emmylou Harris and Sheryl Crow will perform for Linda Ronstadt. Glenn Frey will induct the singer. Michael Stipe of R.E.M. will induct Nirvana, Coldplay's Chris Martin will induct Peter Gabriel, Tom Morello handles those duties for KISS, and Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson will induct fellow Philadelphians Hall and Oates. Inductees Daryl Hall and John Oates, Gabriel and Cat Stevens will perform during the April 10 ceremony, which will be broadcast May 31 on HBO.

Sheriff: Man broke into Selena Gomez guesthouse

CALABASAS, Calif. (AP)—Authorities say they've arrested a man who's accused of breaking into Selena Gomez's guesthouse while the 21-year-old actress and singer was home. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department says 20-year-old transient Cruz Che is being held Monday on $50,000 bail. Deputies didn't know if he'd retained an attorney.

Sgt. Fray Lupian says Gomez arrived at Gomez's Calabasas home at about 9:30 p.m. Sunday when she heard a noise and called security. He says the suspect knocked on the door and a friend answered but slammed it closed when he asked for Gomez. Security found the suspect in the guesthouse and held him for deputies. Gomez, the former "Wizards of Waverly Place" actress turned pop star, was named favorite female singer Saturday night at the Kids' Choice Awards.

Woman in relationship can't resist flirting with other men

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DearAbby

DEAR ABBY: I have been with my current boyfriend for a year and a half and I love him dearly. However, I often find myself drawn to other guys who I know are nothing but trouble. It never goes further than simple flirting, but I still feel guilty for doing it when I'm in a relationship. How do I keep myself from temptation?

HARD TO RESIST

DEAR HARD TO RESIST: Temptation to do what? To involve yourself with a man who is nothing but trouble? A way to discourage that would be to ask yourself how you would feel if you lost your boyfriend. That would be a high price to pay for acting immaturely.

However, if you're asking how to overcome the IMPULSE, my advice is to have an honest conversation with yourself about why you feel the need. Most of the women (and men) who act this way are constantly trying to prove to themselves that they are attractive. If this could be you, then start working on your self-esteem, because if you don't, I predict you'll ruin a good relationship.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I'm in my 50s and overweight. I work hard, eat three meals a day and am—more or less—healthy except for sore feet after work. I'm aware of the medical warnings. Who isn't? But I have decided to accept myself as I am, relax and be happy.

For years I have been hard on myself for not being slim. This is me in my 50s. I don't expect myself to be slim like I was in my 20s. Now I can smile, breathe easier, have a good time, and finally buy the new clothes I have put off buying until I was thinner. My new spirit is weightless and my new attitude has made my life more meaningful. Any thoughts?

LIVING FREE AT LAST

DEAR LIVING FREE: Only this, that we all have choices to make about our health, what is important to us and how we want to live our lives. You have made yours, and at this point it appears to have been the right one for you. May it ever be thus.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My husband has a paralyzing fear of driving over bridges. It interferes with our life together. He is otherwise healthy, but will not see a therapist for this problem.

We have been married for 27 years. I am 63 and he is 67. I am very sad that our life is so limited. Any advice?

LANDLOCKED IN VIRGINIA

DEAR LANDLOCKED: It would be interesting to know how your husband developed this phobia. But because he refuses to do anything about it and you feel restricted, consider traveling with another companion.

■■■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

■■■

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more sociable person, order "How to Be Popular." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

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Pastimes

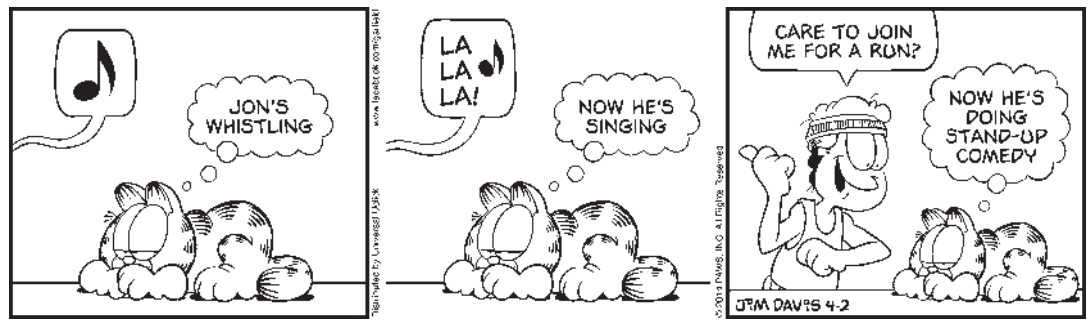
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

WHEN IT SNOWS, YOU CAN GO SLEDDING. WHEN IT'S WINDY, YOU CAN FLY KITES. WHEN IT'S HOT, YOU CAN GO SWIMMING.
BUT WHEN IT'S RAINING... SIGH...
..THE ONLY SPORT IS DRIVING MOM CRAZY.

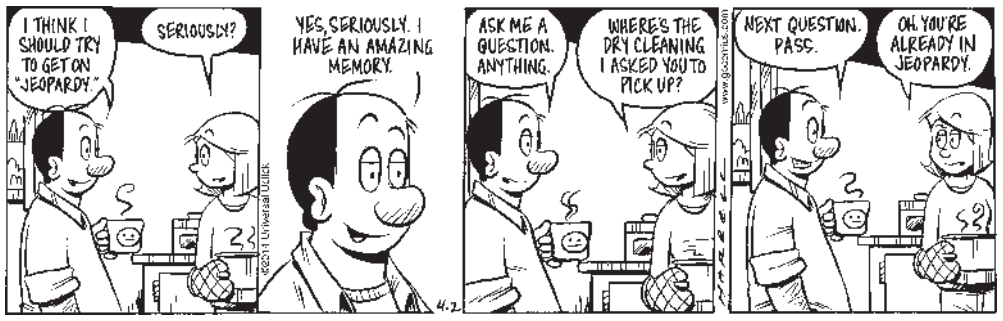
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


I THINK I SHOULD TRY TO GET ON "JEOPARDY."
SERIOUSLY?
YES, SERIOUSLY. I HAVE AN AMAZING MEMORY.
ASK ME A QUESTION. ANYTHING.
WHERE'S THE DRY CLEANING I ASKED YOU TO PICK UP?
NEXT QUESTION. PASS.
OH, YOU'RE ALREADY IN JEOPARDY.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Atty.'s title
4 Norm (Abbr.)
7 Herr's wife
8 Pull the trigger
10 Wilderness Road pioneer
11 Tourist's necessity
13 Nebraska, the Dakotas, etc.
16 — -de -France
17 Hamstrings
18 Energy
19 Willard of boxing lore
20 "Star Wars" knight
21 Coloration
23 Entices
25 Grad
26 Arm or leg
27 Storage acronym
28 Lessen
30 Palm Pilot, for ex.
33 Jon Stewart's employer
36 Sell
37 Herd
38 Pass along
39 Roof overhang
40 Fresh
41 Decorate Easter eggs

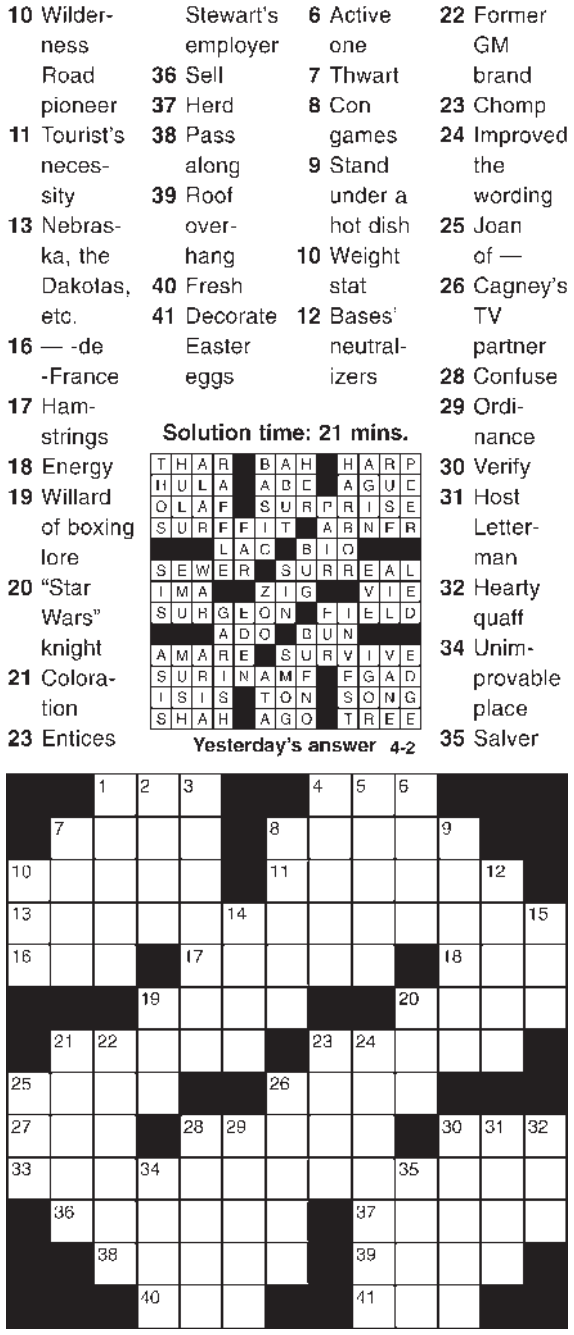
DOWN

1 Wear down
2 Beach matter
3 Pacified
4 Embarrass
5 Big books
6 Active one
7 Thwart
8 Con games
9 Stand under a hot dish
10 Weight stat
12 Bases' neutralizers
14 Facility
15 "— Blue?"
19 Toast topping
20 Triangular sail
21 John B. in song
22 Former GM brand
23 Chomp
24 Improved the wording
25 Joan of —
26 Cagney's TV partner
28 Confuse
29 Ordinance
30 Verify
31 Host Letterman
32 Hearty quaff
34 Unimprovable place
35 Salver

Solution time: 21 mins.

T	H	A	R		B	A	H		H	A	R	P	
H	U	L	A		A	B	C		A	G	U	C	
O	L	A	F		S	U	R	P	R	I	S	E	
S	U	R	F	F	I	T		A	B	N	F	R	
			L	A	C		B	I	O				
S	E	W	E	R		S	U	R	R	E	A	L	
I	M	A			Z	I	G			V	I	E	
S	U	R	G	E	O	N		F	I	E	L	D	
			A	D	O		B	U	N				
A	M	A	R	E		S	U	R	V	I	V	E	
S	U	R	I	N	A	M	E		F	G	A	D	
I	S	I	S		T	O	N		S	O	N	G	
S	H	A	H		A	G	O		T	R	E	E	

Yesterday's answer 4-2



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Michael Fassbender, 37; Christopher Meloni, 53; Emmylou Harris, 67; Linda Hunt, 69.

Happy Birthday: Your ability to be proactive yet cautious will be your ticket to success this year. Separating your emotions from whatever task you face will enable you to reach your goals and impress those who have something to contribute. Building a solid base will ensure long-lasting success. Your desire to experiment, coupled with your innovative ideas, will enhance personal relationships. Your numbers are 8, 14, 24, 27, 33, 36, 41.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Take the plunge and get into the groove. It's time to get fit and fabulous. Sign up for a rigorous routine that will help you look and be your best, both mentally and physically. Any challenge should be welcomed. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Share your feelings. Taking care of the needs of others will help you put your life in perspective. Dealing with matters concerning older or younger people in your life will be rewarding. An important partnership will develop. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Prepare to make last-minute changes based on what others do or say. Don't expect everyone to be honest or give you a proper assessment of a situation you face. Do your own fact-finding and make your choices based on your needs. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Take on an interesting project or challenge that someone presents. Your ability to think outside the box will help you grab the attention of someone with clout. Discussions will help put you in control. Avoid taking on too much. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Jumping from one thing to another may suit you just fine, but it will make those around you nervous. A deal or contract will favor you as long as you keep your emotions hidden. Home improvements will make your life more entertaining. ✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Turn up the volume and take on whatever comes your way. Show your mental and physical abilities. You can stabilize your position among your peers and colleagues. A change in an important relationship will add to your happiness. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Feeling free to come and go as you please and to enjoy friends who offer excitement and adventure will keep you satisfied and enthusiastic about the future. Overspending will be your downfall. Find a way to have fun without being extravagant. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Make important changes at home that will help you accomplish personal goals and expand your interests and friendships. A different lifestyle will help you manage what you want to do with what you are responsible for. Use your imagination. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Get your work out of the way and get on with more enjoyable pastimes. An investment may interest you, but the information you are given will not divulge how high a risk you will be taking. Proceed with caution. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Don't leave anything to chance. If you leave anything unfinished, you will face complaints and opposition. Stick close to home and work hard to complete what's expected of you and you will avoid a dispute. Accomplishment will make you feel good. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Put what you want in writing. Draw up contracts and negotiate your position. You will win in the end if you have a solid plan of action. Socializing is highlighted. Getting together with an old friend will bring back fond memories. ✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): A money matter or joint venture will cause upset. Back up and view your situation from a different angle. Use your imagination, and you will come up with a solution that will be acceptable. Listen, observe and take a smart position. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are creative, active and clever. You are innovative and open-minded.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		4	3	5	6	9		
	5						3	
6								2
3		6	4		9	7		5
5								4
9		1				2		6
1			7	8	5			3
	3						2	
		8	2	3	4	1		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 4/02

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

6	7	8	9	5	3	4	1	2
5	1	9	2	4	6	3	8	7
3	4	2	7	8	1	9	5	6
7	3	4	8	2	9	1	6	5
2	9	1	6	7	5	8	3	4
8	6	5	1	3	4	2	7	9
1	5	3	4	9	7	6	2	8
4	2	7	3	6	8	5	9	1
9	8	6	5	1	2	7	4	3

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY **Solution: 8 letters**

S	P	A	N	I	L	O	R	A	C	I	N	C	I	P
E	Y	A	A	B	M	O	U	N	T	A	I	N	S	R
H	K	A	S	S	U	A	P	A	R	K	S	O	H	O
A	U	O	W	T	H	C	S	I	T	E	S	R	O	O
O	N	M	N	H	U	E	K	L	V	N	O	T	P	S
D	S	A	P	A	G	R	V	E	A	I	R	H	Y	T
N	F	W	T	B	O	I	E	I	Y	B	C	E	T	R
A	O	A	O	I	A	R	H	S	L	E	L	U	A	T
N	R	K	R	D	O	C	E	(L)	E	L	N	V	T	C
E	E	N	R	M	A	N	K	T	(A)	N	E	O	O	N
H	S	I	T	L	I	E	A	V	E	(N)	B	L	O	O
S	T	L	A	L	K	T	M	L	S	B	(D)	I	G	B
I	I	P	Y	C	S	T	R	E	A	M	S	A	N	B
B	P	K	O	E	F	I	L	D	L	I	W	R	I	I
A	S	R	E	W	O	L	F	D	L	I	W	T	A	R

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Abbott, Appalachians, Asheville, Balsam, Biltmore, Boone, Buckeye, Carolina, Cold, Cross, Estate, Farm, Forest, Highways, Humpback, Land, Link, Meadows, Mountains, National, North, Parks, Pastures, Picnic, Ravens, Ribbon, Roanoke, Rock, Roost, Shenandoah, Shop, Sites, Skylines, Streams, Trail, Tunnel, Valleys, Wildflowers, Wildlife

Yesterday's Answer: Piglet

Treasury 12, 13, 14 or 15 can be purchased online at wonderword.universaluclick.com. (Contain 130 puzzles.)

CLASSIFIED ADS

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Spurs' streak hits 18 with 103-77 win at Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Gregg Popovich may be the only guy who can stop San Antonio right now.

If the Spurs coach had his way, this franchise-record winning streak would probably already be over. His players don't see it quite the same way.

Tony Parker scored 22 points, Boris Diaw added 14 and the surging Spurs earned their franchise-record 18th consecutive win by handing the Indiana Pacers their worst home loss of the season, 103-77, Monday night.

"We just wanted to continue to do what we've been doing, which is push the ball and play at a high pace and share the ball," Parker said. "It's nice to have the record in San Antonio, but it still doesn't mean anything if you don't win it all."

A year ago, the Spurs fell short in Game 7 of the NBA Finals at Miami.

This year, San Antonio (58-16) seems to be surging at just the right time. The Spurs haven't lost since Feb. 21 at Phoenix and broke the franchise's previous mark on the 18th anniversary of their only other 17-game winning streak by beating the NBA's best home team on its own court.

If Popovich had his way, this talk would likely be over.

His players don't believe their coach will allow the streak to continue much longer, especially if the Spurs can clinch the NBA's best record with games to spare. They lead Oklahoma City by 3 1/2 games in the Western Conference and have six more wins than the Pacers and seven more than the Heat with eight to play.

"I think he'll be happy if we lose anytime soon," Parker said, laughing before explaining that Popovich might end it himself. "I'm pretty sure because he's going to rest like half of the team."

On Monday, Tim Duncan went 3 of 10 from the field and Manu Ginobili managed only six points and two assists in 16 minutes. The Spurs still routed a team that had been No. 1 in the East all season. Indiana now trails two-time defending champion Miami by percentage points for the top spot in the Eastern Conference.

"We'll worry about a couple of things, staying healthy, finishing the season strong and hopefully going into the playoffs with the confidence we're playing with now," Duncan said.

The loss was a devastating blow to the Pacers, who have made no secret of their desire to get home-court advantage in the East and had a seemingly safe three-game lead after beating Miami at home on Wednesday. But Indiana has lost three straight, finished March with an 8-9 record and the lowest scoring average of any team in the league.

They have lost five of six overall and seem to be in full panic mode with seven games to go.

"It's awful, we've been in a downward spiral and we've been splintering a little bit," Roy Hibbert said. "We've had plenty of players-only meetings and plenty of sit-downs as a team with coaches and we've had some upper management in here, so I don't know. Maybe we should all go to group therapy or something, sit down with Dr. (Chris) Carr and figure out some of our grievances."

Carr is the team's performance psychologist.

Whatever the problem, even the Spurs could tell these were not the same Pacers who posted a double-digit win on San Antonio's home court in December.

Indiana fans, who have seen their team go an NBA-best 33-5 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse this season, let them know they didn't like it by booing at points during the game, most extensively when coach Frank Vogel conceded the loss by sitting his starters for the final 3:37.

Paul George scored 16 points, while Hibbert and Lance Stephenson each finished with 15, but the Pacers were outrebounded 15-7 on the offensive glass and outscored 42-28 on second-chance points.

"Their togetherness really showed, that's where they beat us," George said. "That was a team that's all together playing as one, the team that we were to start the year."

The Spurs put Indiana in a 13-5 hole, then used a 15-0 run to take a 32-15 lead early in the second quarter, forcing Indiana to play catch-up. The Pacers never got closer than seven.

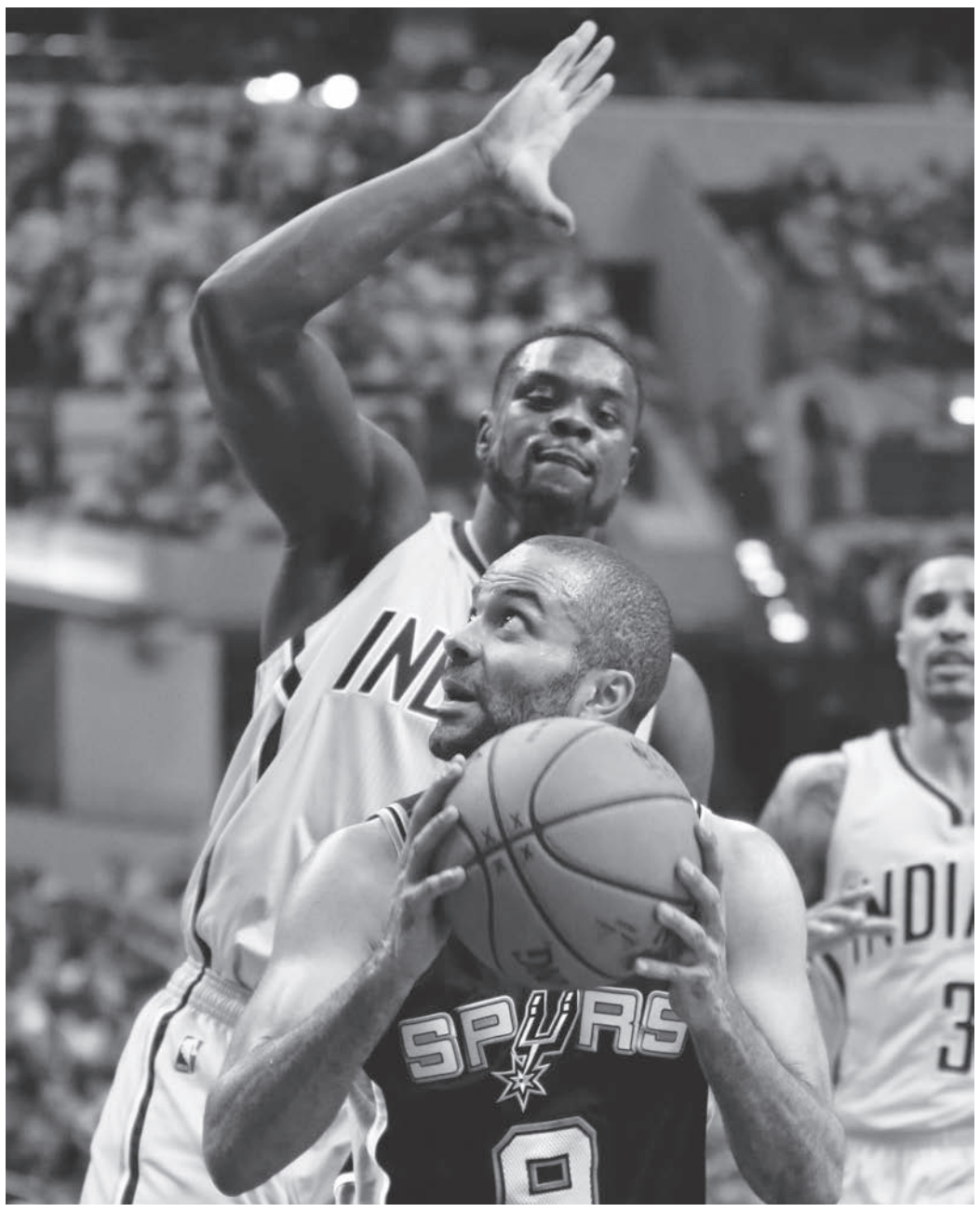
Indiana did have a few bursts.

Stephenson provided some spunk with a one-handed dunk, a steal and a driving layup in a 39-second span of the second quarter to get the Pacers within 37-26. But Parker hit a 20-footer, Ginobili made 1 of 2 free throws and Parker drove in for a layup to rebuild the lead to 48-35 at halftime

When George scored four in a row to finally get the Pacers within single digits at 59-50, Parker's layup during a 5-0 spurt helped San Antonio make it 64-50. And when Indiana got as close as seven early in the fourth, the Spurs ran away.

So how much will Popovich let the streak continue?

"We've never set any numerical goals," the Spurs coach said. "We just talk about being the best team we can, come playoff time."



AP

San Antonio Spurs guard Tony Parker (9) looks to shoot under Indiana Pacers guard Lance Stephenson in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis, Monday, March 31, 2014.

Heat 93, Raptors 83

In Miami, LeBron James scored 32 points and Chris Bosh added 18 as Miami moved into the top spot in the Eastern Conference with a victory over Toronto.

Chris Andersen scored 13 points on 5-for-5 shooting and Mario Chalmers added 12 for Miami, which was again without Dwyane Wade, Greg Oden and Ray Allen.

Miami (51-22, .699) moved percentage points ahead of Indiana (52-23, .693), which lost at home earlier Monday night to San Antonio. It's the first time all season that Miami has been alone atop the East.

The Heat were down 10 midway through the second quarter, and then closed the half on a 22-9 run to take the lead and never trailed again.

Bobcats 100, Wizards 94

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Kemba Walker and Al Jefferson each had a double-double as Charlotte rallied from an 11-point, fourth-quarter deficit to beat Washington, preventing the Wizards from clinching their first playoff berth since 2008.

Walker finished with 21 points and 10 assists, and Jefferson had 19 points and 11 rebounds despite needing seven stitches in the first half to close a gash above his right eye.

The Wizards came in looking to snap the third-longest playoff drought in the NBA, and led by 16 at the half and 11 with 9:13 left in the game.

But Walker scored nine points in the final quarter, helping the Bobcats pull within two games of Washington in the race for the sixth seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

Hawks 103, 76ers 95

In Atlanta, Paul Millsap scored 28 points and Lou Williams added 22 off the bench, rallying Atlanta to a victory that denied Philadelphia its first winning streak in nearly three months.

The Hawks, clinging to the final playoff spot in the East, snapped a six-game losing streak and won for only the seventh time in 27 games. They came into the night one game ahead of the New York Knicks.

Williams hit two crucial 3-pointers from the corner in the closing minutes as the Hawks bounced back from an early 14-point deficit.

The 76ers were coming off a victory over Detroit, snapping an NBA record-tying streak of 26 consecutive losses. But they couldn't win two in a row for the first time since Jan. 4.

Knicks 92, Jazz 83

In Salt Lake City, Carmelo Anthony scored 34 points on 11-of-19 shooting as the New York Knicks pulled away for victory over the Utah Jazz that kept them one game back of the final Eastern Conference playoff berth.

Tyson Chandler added 15 points and nine rebounds, while J.R. Smith scored 13 points and Raymond Felton chipped in 12 points and six assists to help New York (32-43) finish 3-2 on its western trip.

Gordon Hayward scored 18 points, Alec Burks added 17 off the bench and Derrick Favors chipped in 13 points and 13 rebounds for the Jazz (23-52), who lost for the 16th time in their last 18 contests.

Grizzlies 94, Nuggets 92

In Denver, Zach Randolph had 20 points and 11 rebounds and Mike Conley added 19 points as the Memphis Grizzlies kept pace in the playoff race with a win over the Denver Nuggets.

The Grizzlies moved into a three-way tie with Dallas and Phoenix for seventh in the Western Conference. Memphis plays both teams once more — at the Suns on April 14 and home against the Mavericks in the regular-season finale two days later.

The rest of the schedule includes road games at Minnesota and San Antonio, and a home game with Miami, which is battling for the top seed in the Eastern Conference.

Courtney Lee scored 19 points for Memphis, which stopped a two-game skid.

Clippers 114, Timberwolves 104

In Minneapolis, Darren Collison had 28 points and seven assists as Los Angeles didn't miss a beat with Blake Griffin out with a back injury against Minnesota.

Chris Paul had 22 points, nine assists and seven rebounds, and Matt Barnes scored 19 points for the Clippers (53-22). Griffin, the team's leading scorer, warmed up before the game but wasn't quite ready after being injured on Saturday night against Houston.

Jared Dudley started in his place and scored 16 points, while DeAndre Jordan grabbed a career-high 24 rebounds to help the Clippers pull within two games of Oklahoma City for the second seed in the West.

Kevin Love had 20 points, 13 rebounds and four assists for the Wolves.

Bulls 94, Celtics 80

In Chicago, Mike Dunleavy had 22 points to lead five Bulls in double figures as Chicago broke open a close game with 13 straight points at the start of the fourth quarter to beat Boston.

Joakim Noah had 19 points, 11 rebounds and five assists, Jimmy Butler had 18 points, Carlos Boozer 16 and Taj Gibson 14 points and 11 rebounds.

Chicago swept the home-and-home series with the Celtics after posting a 107-102 victory in Boston on Sunday.

The Celtics have lost 10 straight on the road to drop to 8-28 away from home. Their last road win was Feb. 10 at Milwaukee.

Brandon Bass and Jerryd Bayless had 18 points apiece for the Celtics.

Pistons 116, Bucks 111

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Greg Monroe had 28 points and 14 rebounds as Detroit ended a three-game skid with a victory over Milwaukee.

Josh Smith scored eight of his 26 points during a 12-0 fourth-quarter run that wiped out a 98-92 Bucks lead and gave the Pistons the lead for good. His 3-pointer with 1:11 to go and a subsequent dunk put the game away in the matchup of the NBA Central Division's two worst teams.

Brandon Knight had 25 points and Ramon Sessions added 20 points and 11 assists for Milwaukee, which lost its 10th consecutive road game and dropped the season series 3-1 to the Pistons.

Kings 102, Pelicans 97

In New Orleans, DeMarcus Cousins had 35 points and 14 rebounds as Sacramento snapped a three-game skid by beating New Orleans.

Ray McCallum, starting because of Isaiah Thomas' right thigh injury, scored 22 points. Rudy Gay also scored 22, including a momentum-swinging 3-pointer after the Pelicans had pulled within a point in the fourth quarter.

Reggie Evans grabbed 12 rebounds before his ejection for an elbow to Anthony Davis' face on a collision that occurred as Evans went up for a close-range shot.

Davis, returning from left ankle injury that forced him to miss a start on Saturday, had 22 points. Anthony Morrow scored 23 points for the Pelicans, who have dropped two straight on the heels of their season-high, five-game winning streak.

Phillies open with 14-10 victory at Rangers

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP)—Jimmy Rollins had a grand slam during his memorable opening day for the Philadelphia Phillies, who needed a lot of runs to get usually reliable ace Cliff Lee a victory in his return to Texas.

Rollins hit his 200th career homer and pinch-hitter John Mayberry Jr. had a tiebreaking two-run double that put the Phillies ahead for good in a wild 14-10 victory over the Rangers on Monday.

Rollins matched Cal Ripken's major league record by starting his 14th consecutive opener at shortstop for the same franchise. He also became the 19th player in major league history with at least 400 doubles, 100 triples and 200 homers.

"J-Roll, with the big pop early, just really set the tone and got things going," Phillies manager Ryne Sandberg said. "I think it was contagious after that."

The Phillies had 17 hits and their most runs in a season opener since 1900. It was more than enough to make up for a rough outing for Lee (1-0), who was unable to protect a 6-0 lead after Rollins homered in the second inning.

Rollins, whose wife is expecting their second child, flew to Texas on Sunday, a day after the rest of the team did.

"I didn't want to come here and then have to fly to Philadelphia," Rollins said. "The baby has let me go out and play ball for a few more days."

Marlon Byrd and Cody Asche also homered for the Phillies, who beat the Boston Beaneaters 19-17 in their 1900 opener.

Converted Rangers reliever Tanner Scheppers gave up seven runs over four innings. But the game was tied when Scheppers threw his last pitch.

Mayberry, a first-round draft pick by the Rangers in 2005 who never played for the big league club and was traded three years later, got his tiebreaking hit in the fifth against Pedro Figueroa (0-1) for a 9-7 lead.

Lee matched his career high by allowing eight runs and struck out only one, but the left-hander made it through five innings in another less-than-stellar opener for him in the Rangers' home ballpark.

"I don't like being on the pitching side of that, but fortunately we outscored them and got the win, the main thing," said Lee, who had a solid spring. "Jimmy hitting that grand slam busted it open. And we kept adding it on and we needed it, as it turned out."

Lee got a nice ovation before pitching in Texas for the first time since starting for the Rangers in Game 5 of the 2010 World Series. The lefty also made a season-opening start here for Cleveland in 2009, when the then-reigning AL Cy Young Award winner allowed seven runs over five innings in a 9-1 loss.

AP

Philadelphia Phillies' Jimmy Rollins hits a grand slam home run against the Texas Rangers during the second inning of an opening day baseball game at Globe Life Park, Monday, March 31, 2014, in Arlington, Texas.

With starters Yu Darvish, Matt Harrison and Derek Holland on the disabled list, Scheppers became the first pitcher since Fernando Valenzuela for the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1981 to make his first career start on opening day. Scheppers, who had 76 relief appearances last season, struck out two and walked three.

"I was extremely disappointed. You bear down there. My pitches were around the zone," Scheppers said. "I was just trying to be too fine with everything, trying to hit corners. Unfortunately, I put the guys in a big hole."

Texas went ahead 7-6 on Alex Rios' three-run homer in the third, but Philly got even in the fourth on Chase Utley's RBI single, the first of his three hits.

Phillies leadoff hitter Ben Revere also had three hits, drove in three runs and scored twice. He hit .305 last season, but missed the entire second half with foot problems.

Orioles 2, Red Sox 1

In Baltimore, Nelson Cruz celebrated his Baltimore debut by hitting a tiebreaking homer in the seventh off Jon Lester (0-1), sending World Series champion Boston to an opening loss.

Signed as a free agent in February, Cruz hit 27 homers last year with Texas during a season marred by a 50-game suspension stemming from an investigation of performance-enhancing drugs.

After missing two seasons recovering from knee surgery, Boston center fielder Grady Sizemore marked his return from a 922-day absence with a second-inning single for his first hit since September 2011. The three-time All-Star for Cleveland later hit his first home run since July 15, 2011, also at Camden Yards.

Zach Britton (1-0) pitched two scoreless innings, and Tommy Hunter worked the ninth for his first save.

Tigers 4, Royals 3

In Detroit, Alex Gonzalez drove in the winning run in his Detroit debut, lining a single to left off Greg Holland in the ninth.

Acquired by Detroit in late March following an injury to shortstop Jose Iglesias, Gonzalez made a costly error in Kansas City's three-run fourth but made up for that with a tying triple in the seventh. He then singled with men on first and third in the ninth, giving Brad Ausmus a win in his first game since replacing Jim Leyland as the Tigers' manager.

Joe Nathan (1-0) pitched a scoreless ninth in his first appearance for the Tigers. Wade Davis (0-1) allowed a one-out walk to Alex Avila and a single to Nick Castellanos in the ninth.

Holland—who had 47 saves in 50 chances last year—couldn't escape the jam as the Royals lost their sixth straight opener.

Rays 9, Blue Jays 2

In St. Petersburg, Florida, David Price (1-0) allowed two runs and six hits over 7 1-3 innings to beat R.A. Dickey in a matchup of 2012 Cy Young pitching award winners.

Matt Joyce drove in three runs for the Rays with a sacrifice fly and two-run double off Dickey (0-1), who yielded six two-out runs in five innings.

Toronto's Jose Reyes left the lineup after his first at-bat because of a tight left hamstring.

White Sox 5, Twins 3

In Chicago, Alejandro De Aza hit two homers, and Jose Abreu had two hits in his major league debut.

Chicago's Paul Konerko got a loud ovation before what was likely his final opener, although he wasn't in the lineup. The White Sox are coming off a 63-99 season, their poorest record since 1970.

Chris Sale (1-0) allowed three runs and five hits in 7 1-3 innings with eight strikeouts to beat Ricky Nolasco (0-1), who gave up five runs and 10 hits in six innings in his Twins debut.

Mariners 10, Angels 3

In Anaheim, Californi, Abraham Almonte hit a tiebreaking RBI double in the seventh inning and Felix Hernandez struck out 11 in the new-look Mariners victory over the Angels.

Robinson Cano went 2 for 4 with a double and an intentional walk in the $240 million second baseman's debut for new Seattle manager Lloyd McClendon.

Justin Smoak hit a three-run homer and Dustin Ackley had a bases-clearing triple while the Mariners batted around in the ninth inning.

Mike Trout hit a two-run homer in the first inning and Albert Pujols had a run-scoring double for the Angels.

Hernandez (1-0) gave up four hits over six innings in his seventh opening day start for the Mariners. He outdueled Jered Weaver (0-1), who yielded six hits and three walks.

Indians 2, Athletics 0

In Oakland, California, Nyjer Morgan hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the ninth inning against new Athletics closer Jim Johnson as the Indians sent Oakland to its major league-record 10th straight opening loss.

Nick Swisher added an RBI single against Johnson (0-1), who was then pulled from his A's debut.

In the sixth, crew chief Mike Winters became the first umpire to initiate a review under the expanded replay system, making the call after a collision at home plate. Winters requested the review on a close play that kept Cleveland from breaking a scoreless tie. The call was confirmed in 59 seconds.

Cody Allen (1-0) got the win.

Brewers 2, Braves 0

In Milwaukee, Brewers star Ryan Braun drew a standing ovation in his return from a drug suspension, then was ruled out in the first call overturned under baseball's expanded replay system as Milwaukee beat the Atlanta Braves.

Braun went 1 for 4 and stole a base in the fourth inning that helped set up a two-run double by Aramis Ramirez.

A smattering of boos during Braun's first at-bat was easily drowned out by the overwhelming applause. The former MVP was suspended for the final 65 games last year in the Biogenesis doping scandal.

Later, Braun had his infield single to lead off the sixth overturned to out after the call was challenged by Braves manager Fredi Gonzalez under Major League Baseball's new replay format.

The review took 58 seconds.

Yovani Gallardo (1-0) tossed six shutout innings for the win.

Making his first opening day start, Julio Teheran (0-1) allowed two runs and seven hits in six innings.

Cardinals 1, Reds 0

In Cincinnati, Yadier Molina's homer broke a seventh-inning tie, leading St. Louis Cardinals to a victory over the Reds.

Adam Wainwright (1-0) used his refined sinker to finally get the best of the Reds, who have hit him like no other team. Wainwright allowed three hits in seven innings, fanning nine.

St. Louis escaped a threat in the eighth. Trevor Rosenthal retired all three batters in the ninth, finishing a three-hitter for the defending National League champions.

Bryan Price lost his managing debut with Cincinnati, which opened the season with eight players on the disabled list, its most since 2007.

Johnny Cueto (1-0) allowed three hits in seven innings.

Pirates 1, Cubs 0, 10 innings

In Pittsburgh, Neil Walker homered off Carlos Villanueva leading off the 10th inning as the Pirates benefited from an overturned to call to beat the Cubs 1-0 on opening day.

Reliever Bryan Morris (1-0) won with the help of an overturned pickoff call in the top of the 10th under Major League Baseball's new replay system. Starter Francisco Liriano and four relievers combined for 11 strikeouts.

Emilio Bonifacio went 4 for 5 for Chicago, but the Cubs were 0 for 11 with runners in scoring position and wasted a fine start by Jeff Samardzija, who scattered five hits over seven innings.

Marlins 10, Rockies 1

In Miami, Jose Fernandez struck out nine and allowed one run in six innings, and Marlins newcomer Casey McGehee drove in four runs with two doubles to help Miami beat the Rockies.

The sellout crowd of 37,116 was the largest yet at Marlins Park, which opened two years ago.

The 21-year-old Fernandez earned the victory while becoming the youngest NL opening-day starter since Dwight Gooden in 1986, according to STATS.

Marcell Ozuna homered, doubled, singled and scored twice. Giancarlo Stanton had an RBI infield single and a run-scoring double. Adeiny Hechavarria singled three times and drove in a run.

Carlos Gonzalez homered for the Rockies in the sixth, but by then they trailed 6-0. Jorge De La Rosa (0-1) allowed five runs in 4 1-3 innings in his first opening day start.

Nationals 9, Mets 7, 10 innings

In New York, Anthony Rendon hit a three-run homer in the 10th inning and drove in a career-high four runs, twice rallying the Nationals against the Mets' suspect bullpen for an opening-day victory.

Denard Span hit a tying double with two outs in the ninth off closer Bobby Parnell, and Ian Desmond put the Nationals in front for the first time with a sacrifice fly in the 10th. Rendon connected two batters later against former Washington pitcher John Lannan, securing a win for Matt Williams in his first game as a major league manager.

Stephen Strasburg struck out 10 over six innings in his third straight opening-day start.

Juan Lagares and Andrew Brown both homered for New York after they were surprise additions to the lineup.

Aaron Barrett (1-0) struck out two in a perfect inning to win his major league debut.

Jeurys Familia (0-1) took the loss, hurt by catcher Travis d'Arnaud's passed ball.

Registration for Guam marathon coming to a close

» Record numbers of local and international runners to participate

TUMON, Guam—The Guam Visitors Bureau, along with the Pacific Islands Club Guam and United Airlines, will host the Guam International Marathon set to take place on April 13.

Runners can register online at www.guaminternationalmarathon.com or at the Pacific Islands Club in Tumon. Registration will close on Tuesday, April 8, 2014. Online registration is the most convenient, accurate and environmentally friendly way to register with no additional fees. Online registrants will receive a confirmation email which allows them the opportunity to sign up for live race day results tracking through social media (Facebook and Twitter) and mobile phone devices.

Over 2,300 runners have already registered, with over 1,250 of those coming from core visitor markets such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Philippines, Australia, and the United States mainland. More than 600 runners in total have registered so far to run the marathon, 600 in the half marathon, 500 in the 10K and over 600 in the 5K. Space is limited to 700 and 1,000 runners in the 10K and 5K, respectively.

Registered runners are reminded that race packets (timing chip/bib) can only be picked up on April 11th or 12th from 10am to 6pm at the GIM Expo to be held at the Pacific Islands Club Pacific Pavilion. Race packet pick up is mandatory. Runners will not be allowed to participate in the event without a timing chip/bib. Race updates and information can also be found on the official event Facebook page at www.facebook.com/guaminternationalmarathon.

GIM participants and spectators are encouraged to follow and post updates and photos of this year's event using #GIM2014 on GIM social media channels—Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

The Guam International Marathon is also sponsored by ASC Trust Corporation, Bank of Guam, DFS Galleria, Docomo Pacific, Powerade, Nanbo Insurance, Tokyo Marine Pacific, Taico Corporation, SPPC 76 and Circle K, Luckland, Taico Corporation, TakeCare Insurance, and the stations of KUAM. ***(PR)***

Jared Allen settles in with Bears

LAKE FOREST, Ill. (AP)—Defensive end Jared Allen turns 32 this week. He wants nothing to do with the idea of becoming a situational pass rusher as a 30-something Chicago Bear.

Allen plans to play as many snaps as possible at the right defensive end spot he played the previous 10 years for the Minnesota Vikings and Kansas City Chiefs, with the hope of turning around a defense that dropped from third to 30th in scoring last season.

"It's just, I have a lot left in this tank," Allen said Monday during his first visit to Halas Hall. "My body feels good. And again, I feel like I can make waves. And not for me, personally. I want to win a Super Bowl."

Allen decided against possibly joining forces with the Super Bowl champion Seattle Seahawks to take a four-year contract for a reported $32 million with the Bears, a move viewed by some as one of NFL free agency's biggest surprises.

"What attracted me here is the opportunity to go out and win it, to earn it and win it and be a part of it and be a piece of that puzzle," Allen said. "And again, like I've always said, things have to line up. It has to be the right place, great for my family. Obviously, you want a fair contract throughout the whole deal. And everything lined up."

Allen will line up with defense completely rebuilt at end since last year and said he'll enjoy playing alongside former Dallas Cowboys defensive tackle Jeremiah Ratliff, who the Bears signed during the 2013 season after he recovered from a groin tear.

"We're going to be a vaunted Bears defense again, and it's going to start with us up front, it's going to start with that front seven," Allen said.

FALCONS

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Jets with two quick strikeouts at the top of the third. The Jets were called for the second out earlier, as their leadoff batter was beaten to second. Yaguel allowed no hits and walked only two runners in the route.

The one-sided win over the Jets was a fitting follow-up on the Falcons' 25-1 demolition of the Twins in a make-up game last Wednesday.

The Falcons also got off to a jackrabbit start, firing 17 runs in the first inning to set up the easy win. The Falcons slowed down a bit in the second three runs, including a solo homer from Angel Iguel. Two more homers, one each from Aven Evangelista and Yaguel, at the top of the third capped the Falcons' dominance of the hapless Twins (0-10)

Iguel went 4-for-4 for the Falcons and scored seven RBIs, while Evangelista added four RBIS and was also perfect at bat, going 3-for-3.

Enforcers 16, Jets 5

In another make-up game last week, the Enforcers (6-4) downed the Jets.

The Enforcers bagged seven runs each in the second and fourth inning to secure the win two innings early.

Holding a shaky 1-0 lead after one complete inning, the Enforcers notched five unearned runs in the second for a 9-0 advantage. After two scoreless innings, the Jets made it to the board in the third with three runs and got two more in the fourth, but the Enforcers countered with eight runs in the last two innings for the early decision via a 10-run mercy rule.

Little Legals 17, Red Sox 5

In the third game last Saturday, the Little Legals (7-4) topped the Red Sox (3-7).

The Little Legals hit their targets early and then closed out strong after struggling in the middle innings to extend their streak to three.

The Kagman-based squad collected nine runs in the first two innings to gain control of the match and they tallied eight runs in the last two. Gloyd Martin led the Little Legals with his three RBIs and 3-for-5 performance at bat. The Little Legals starting pitcher also logged three runs and two doubles.

Meanwhile, the IP&E Rockies (5-6) won the second game last Saturday after a no-show from Comets II (2-9).

MP

From Page 28

the second in the sixth before completing the hat-trick in the 12th minute.

Joining Tenorio on the champion squad are Steven Goodwin, Maaya Sato, Daniele Colombo, Goen Ho Lee, Jon and Gillian Villagomez, Edwin Kim, Francesca Bucalig, Eun Syu Hahn, Christian Bravo, Seung Mock You, and Maury Zon Tybaco. James McAllister and Chris Park are the coach and assistant coach, respectively.

MP United 1 advanced to the finals after posting a 3-1-0 win-draw-loss record in the round-robin elimination. It started its bid in the one-day event with a scoreless draw against sister team MP United 2 and then made it to the win column via a 1-0 victory over Vivid Blue. Tenorio drained the lone goal in the game and had another one in their 5-1 trouncing of Shirley's FC. Jon Villagomez led MP United 1's win over Shirley's FC, as he logged a pair of goals, while Edwin Kim and Colombo chipped in one apiece.

The eventual champion went on to sweep their last three games after shutting down Tinian Premier FC, 4-0. Tenorio canned all four goals in the victory to hand MP United FC 1 the outright and first finals berth.

Vivid Blue, which finished the elimination with a 3-1 win-loss record, placed second and had to battle third finisher MP United FC 2 (2-1-1) for the second and last finals ticket. In the make-or-break semis, Vivid Blue escaped with a 1-0 win to foil an all-MP United finale. Fuuta Kubota scored the lone goal in the rubber match, hitting his target in the seventh minute.

Eight other players suited up for Vivid Blue in the weekend tournament. Joining Kubota on the team are Ayato Handa, Wataru Horike, Hizuki Katayama, Yohei Shoji, Shimon Ohkawa, Hokuto Tsujita, Daiya Satchi, and Junki Tsumeda. Sachiko Tahara and Kosuke Yakubo are the coaches.

Meanwhile, Tenorio was handed the Golden Boot award at the conclusion of the tournament for recording nine goals, while Goodwin took the Golden Glove plum for giving up only one goal in four games. Tenorio was also adjudged team MVP, along with MP United 2's Matthew Ong, Vivid Blue's Ohkawa, Shirley's Taka Borja, and Tinian's Renuka Shrestha.

"We thank all the participating teams, especially Vivid Blue for visiting us again. Without their dedication and friendship, we would not have been able to host this event. We also want to thank all of our club officers, parents, families, and supporters, and our wonderful sponsors, including NMIFA and IT&E. A very big thanks to Shirley's Coffee Shop too for providing food and drinks/snacks for the Cup," MP United FC president Vickie Izuka said.

The club also extended its appreciation to other supporters of the tournament and MP United's participation to the Pacific Ocean Cup 3: I Love Saipan, Auntie Mags, Saipan Bowling Center, Hyatt Regency, Kingfisher Golf, Triple J, Topnotch, The Shack, Shirley's Coffee Shop, Konflikt Sporting, Sean & Anne Photography, Brothers Oriental Clinic, IP&E, and Koblerville Elementary School.

NOTRE

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collared a lot of rebounds and issued several assists.

She was applauded by the crowd on several occasions, as she went for coast-to-coast drives and even got an and-1 play on a fastbreak layup against the MISO All-Stars' Denise Samson in the first half. However, her most impressive move came midway in the fourth quarter when she converted an alley-oop play from the right baseline off a feed from Bryanika Arceo. The shot capped the Royals' short 6-0 run and foiled the MISO All-Stars' bid to trim the deficit to single digits. Before the Royals' 6 straight points, the MISO All-Stars moved to within 11, 45-56.

The visiting team started controlling the title game when it went on a 14-3 windup in the last four minutes of the opening quarter. Notre Dame was ahead by only one, 8-7, when Castro sparked the breakaway past the halfway mark of the first period. She scored 13 points, including 6 of their last 8 markers.

The MISO All-Stars never recovered from thereon, as they failed to neutralize Castro and had only Jan Travilla and Michelle Kautz fighting back against the Royals. Travilla matched Castro's output, while Kautz chipped in 18.

Meanwhile, in the battle for third place, Settsu Red Impulse routed dethroned champions MHS Lady Dolphins, 77-43.

The visiting team broke the game wide open in the second quarter, turning an 18-12 advantage to a 41-23 halftime lead. Yuina Inui led the Red Impulse in the second quarter, as she drilled 9 of her game-high 16 points I that period, while Mizuki Iwasaki contributed 8, including two triples.

Diana Pablo paced MHS with her 14 markers.

Consolation

Settsu 77 – Inui 16, Furutani 13, Mizuta 12, Iwasaki 9, Oida 6, Obayashi 5.

MHS 43 – Pablo 14, Reyes 11, Race 8, Echavez 6, Rastguiy 2, Farro 2.

Scoring by quarters: 18-12, 41-23, 54-31, 77-43.

Finals

Notre Dame 69 – Castro 24, Arceo 14, Brennan 9, Murphy 8, Dudkiewicz 3, Chargualaf 3.

MISO All-Stars 55 – Travilla 24, M. Kautz 18, Lebria 4, Samson 3, Obaldo 2, Reyes 1, Santos 2.

Scoring by quarters: 22-10, 33-22, 51-38, 69-55.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Toronto	42	32	.568	–
Brooklyn	39	33	.542	2
New York	32	43	.427	10½
Boston	23	51	.311	19
Philadelphia	16	58	.216	26

Southeast Division

y-Miami	51	22	.699	–
Washington	38	36	.514	13½
Charlotte	36	38	.486	15½
Atlanta	32	41	.438	19
Orlando	21	53	.284	30½

Central Division

y-Indiana	52	23	.693	–
x-Chicago	42	32	.568	9½
Cleveland	30	45	.400	22
Detroit	27	47	.365	24½
Milwaukee	14	60	.189	37½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

x-San Antonio	58	16	.784	–
Houston	49	23	.681	8
Dallas	44	30	.595	14
Memphis	44	30	.595	14
New Orleans	32	42	.432	26

Northwest Division

x-Oklahoma City	54	19	.740	–
Portland	48	27	.640	7
Minnesota	36	37	.493	18
Denver	32	42	.432	22½
Utah	23	52	.307	32

Pacific Division

x-L.A. Clippers	53	22	.707	–
Golden State	45	28	.616	7
Phoenix	44	30	.595	8½
Sacramento	26	48	.351	26½
L.A. Lakers	25	48	.342	27

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

MLB STANDINGS

AMERICAN LEAGUE

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	1	0	1.000	–
Tampa Bay	1	0	1.000	–
New York	0	0	.000	½
Boston	0	1	.000	1
Toronto	0	1	.000	1

Central Division

Chicago	1	0	1.000	–
Cleveland	1	0	1.000	–
Detroit	1	0	1.000	–
Kansas City	0	1	.000	1
Minnesota	0	1	.000	1

West Division

Seattle	1	0	1.000	–
Houston	0	0	.000	½
Los Angeles	0	1	.000	1
Oakland	0	1	.000	1
Texas	0	1	.000	1

NATIONAL LEAGUE

East Division

Miami	1	0	1.000	–
Philadelphia	1	0	1.000	–
Washington	1	0	1.000	–
Atlanta	0	1	.000	1
New York	0	1	.000	1

Central Division

Milwaukee	1	0	1.000	–
Pittsburgh	1	0	1.000	–
St. Louis	1	0	1.000	–
Chicago	0	1	.000	1
Cincinnati	0	1	.000	1

West Division

San Diego	1	0	1.000	–
San Francisco	1	0	1.000	–
Los Angeles	2	1	.667	–
Colorado	0	1	.000	1
Arizona	0	3	.000	2

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fielders split games in SBL; Brewers share lead

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Last season's finalists Fielders split their two most recent games in the 2014 Saipan Baseball League.

The Fielders defeated the Tigers, 9-7, last Monday night at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield, bouncing back from a 1-7 loss to the GSM Brewers last Wednesday.

Brian McAllister and Arthur Jebehn hit RBI singles to help the Fielders down the Tigers (3-5) and improve their record to 4-5. McAllister's base hit drove Cadez Tenorio home and broke the deadlock at the bottom of the eighth inning, while Jebehn's single brought the former home. Tenorio was the second Fielders batter at the bottom of the eighth and had a triple.

At the top of the ninth, relief pitcher Jared Sablan got two quick strikeouts to move the Fielders closer to victory, however Tom Guerrero then kept the Tigers' hopes alive with a single. Guerrero eventually advanced to second after Sablan walked Mark Toves, but the Fielders runners were stranded and the Fielders secured the win, as left-fielder Joe Palacios caught a fly ball from Ian Rogolifoi.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A Brewers batter waits for a pitch from the Tigers during their game in the 2014 Saipan Baseball League late last month at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield.

It was a come-from-behind win for the Fielders, as the Tigers managed to take a 6-2 lead after three innings. The Fielders got into the board first with their two runs in first inning, but the Tigers bounced back with four runs in the second and two more in the third. The Tigers added another run in the fifth to stay on top, but failed to score in the last four innings to miss their bid for the fourth win.

Meanwhile, Tom Camacho and Vince Cepeda combined for only four hits to lift the GSM Brewers to the easy win over the Fielders last week.

The Brewers now have a 6-1 record for a tie for first place with the Yankees, who got a win via forfeit over the D-9ers (0-7) last Friday.

Camacho pitched four innings and gave up three hits. Cepeda took over the mound in the last five innings and did a better job, allowing only one hit and striking out eight. With Camacho and Cepeda in tough form, the Fielders failed to get an earned run. The Fielders' lone run was scored off a Brewers' error in the third inning.

The Brewers also got one run of the Fielders' miscue in the third inning to take the lead, 2-1, and kept going in the last six, bagging four earned runs and one off another Fielders' booboo.

Road closure for XTERRA, Tagaman races

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan bikers pose in front of an XTERRA Saipan trail sign during a practice ride a few weeks ago.

With the 2014 XTERRA Saipan Championship and Tagaman Triathlon just around the corner, race organizer Taga, Inc. and the Department of Public Safety are advising motorists and pedestrians on specific road closures.

XTERRA will be held this Saturday and the race will start at Micro Beach, which will be closed from 5:30am to 8:35am. Only cars with passes will be allowed to go through this area. Other areas that are off limits to the public during certain times are the intersection on Capitol Hill at Isa Drive and Asencion Drive to Magellan Club/Wireless (from 7:30am to 9:35am); the paved road to Talafofo from Kingfisher left turn to Egigi Drive (7:45am to 9:35am); the left hand turn off Capital Hill at Sara Market II (8am to 9:55am); Chalan Galaide or the upper Navy Hill road from Mt. Tapochao to Delafield (8:15am to 10pm); Middle Road and Sugar King Road (9am to 10:45am); Micro Beach and Middle Road (9:15am to 11am); Middle Road near National Guard Yard, crossing Anak's (7am to 10:30am); and Middle Road between Sugar King and the old Japanese prison and hospital (8am to 12:30pm).

For the Tagaman, which will take place on April 12, the following roads will be closed: Pacific Islands Club to Koblerville, Chalan Msg. Martinez, Coral Ocean Point, intersection of Flame Tree Road, and Tan Herman Pan Road (from 5:30am to 8am); PIC to Garapan Fire Station's northbound (6am to 8am) and south bound (one lane, 7am to 11:30am); Micro Beach to the AMP tennis court intersection (6am to 11:30am); and Chalan Pale Arnold or W2 highway at AMP tennis court intersection to La Fiesta and As Matuis turnoff (outside lanes closed from 6:30am to 10:30am). Inside lanes on these areas (both south and northbound) will be open to limited traffic and police officers will designate lanes.

The Marpi Road (Chalan Pale Arnold to Chalan Kalabera, Bird Island Lookout, Grotto, and Banzai Cliff) will also be closed from 6:30am to 9am.

"We are seeking everyone's cooperation as the XTERRA Saipan Championship and Tagaman Triathlon have been looked upon as very safe events," Taga, Inc. president Wolf Mojica said in a memo sent to all concerned parties.

Both XTERRA and Tagaman are expected to lure on and off-island participants. Some pros who competed in XTERRA Guam are now on Saipan and a press conference is scheduled two days before the race kicks off. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

HANMI golf classic set on June 7

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The 13th Annual HANMI Charity Golf Classic Tournament will be held on June 7 at the Mariana Country Club in Marpi.

One of the most highly anticipated annual golf tournaments in the Northern Mariana Islands is set to tee-off on June 7, as the 13th Annual HANMI Charity Golf Classic Tournament prepares to offer golfers the chance to win enticing prizes while supporting a good cause.

This year's tournament will be held at Mariana Country Club and will be open to the first 144 paid registrants. Cash and numerous in-kind prizes await the winners, and proceeds of the tournament will be contributed to community charities.

"We encourage all golfers to mark their calendars for the 13th HANMI Charity Golf Classic Tournament," said tournament chair Steve Balakrishna. "This year, we hope to make it the most memorable tournament, yet."

Registration forms will be available shortly. Early bird tournament fee is $105 for payments received by 5pm, June 5. The fee includes green fee and the awards banquet. The fee increases to $125 after the early bird deadline. For an additional $25, players may also compete for nearest to the pin, most accurate drive, and longest drive. The tournament will start at 7am.

The tournament features six categories: Championship Flight, A Flight, B Flight, C Flight, Seniors, and Ladies. Players in the Championship Flight must have 0-6 handicaps, while those in A Flight are 7- 11 handicappers. The B Flight is for players with 12-17 handicap, while C Flight are for players with handicap 18 and up. Senior category is for ages 55 and up.

First place winners of all flights will receive $300, a trophy, and a hotel stay at one of the HANMI member hotels. Second place finishers will receive $200, a trophy, and dinner gift certificate at one of the HANMI member hotel, and third place winners will receive $100, a trophy, and lunch gift certificate at one of the HANMI member hotel. Winners for the female category will be determined using the Double Peoria handicap system. ***(PR)***

Spurs' streak hits 18 with 103-77 win at Indiana

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Phillies open with 14-10 victory at Rangers

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Falcons soar past Jets

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
The Falcons' Aven Evangelista swings the bat during a make-up game against the GSM Twins in the Major division of the 2014 Saipan Little League Baseball last week at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Pangelinan Ballfield.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Falcons recorded the most lopsided victory so far in the Major division of the 2014 Saipan Little League Baseball after pummeling the Jets, 32-1, last Saturday at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Pangelinan Ballfiled.

It took the Falcons only three innings to end the Jets' misery and regain the top spot in the 15-team field with their 10-1 record. The Jets remained at the bottom half of the team standings with their 1-9 mark.

A 12-run bottom of the first ignited a Falcons breakaway. Six of the Falcons' top of the order batted twice in the first and three scored twice. In the second inning, the Falcons were still unstoppable, racking up 18 runs. Only one of the batters at the top of the order failed to reach home, but in their second at bat all nine scored. Zack Reyes drilled three runs at the bottom of the second, outscoring the entire Jets crew, who made only one unearned run at the top of the second.

Arby Yaguel finished off the

See FALCONS on Page 26

Notre Dame wins debut in Settsu caging

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Notre Dame's Destiny Castro drives against the MISO All-Stars' Jeromalyn Santos (red uniform), during the second quarter of their title game in the Settsu caging last Friday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Guam's Notre Dame had a winning debut in the women's division of the 2014 Settsu-Saipan Friendship Basketball Tournament after dominating the MISO All-Stars in the title game, 69-55, last Friday at Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Destiny Castro powered the Royals to the championship, as she scored 24 points, punishing the MISO All-Stars' defense with her all-around game. Castro gained points off triples, short jumpers, and several layups and while statistics were not recorded in the title match, she also

See NOTRE on Page 26

MP United 1 rules Pacific Ocean Cup 4

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
An MP United FC 1 player tries to keep the ball away from a Vivid Blue defender during their championship game in the Pacific Ocean Cup 4 last Sunday at the Koblerville Elementary School Field.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

MP United Football Club 1 hoisted the Pacific Ocean Cup 4 after blanking the visiting Vivid Blu FC, 3-0, in the winner-take-all finale last Sunday at the Koblerville Elementary School Field.

Pacific Ocean Cup 3 MVP Sun Joon Tenorio scored all three goals in the championship match to help MP United bounce back from a runner-up finish in the third leg of the goodwill tournament held in Japan two weeks ago. Tenorio made back-to-back goals in a span of two minutes, drilling his first in the fourth minute and

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